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BY THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

**Report To The Secretary
Of The Air Force**

115339

**Delays In Disposing Of Former
Communication Sites In Alaska:
--Millions In Property Lost
--Public Safety Jeopardized**

In the 1950s, the Air Force spent over \$250 million to establish the White Alice Communication System in Alaska—a network of 69 sites that provided communications for defense activities. Made obsolete by a satellite communication system, a number of the sites have been closed.



The Air Force's failure to adequately protect and maintain real and personal property at the sites, plus delays in disposing of the sites, has allowed millions of dollars of property to be lost or destroyed. Further, there are numerous safety, chemical, and environmental hazards at the sites. Because of lax security, the sites are subject to trespass, thus posing a danger to the general public.

GAO recommends that the Air Force speed up the disposal process, eliminate the safety hazards, and better protect the property awaiting disposal.



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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

PROCUREMENT, LOGISTICS,
AND READINESS DIVISION

B-202940

The Honorable Verne Orr
The Secretary of the Air Force

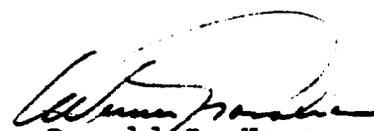
Dear Mr. Secretary:

This report discusses problems in Air Force efforts to dispose of real and personal property at White Alice Communication System sites in Alaska. It also discusses deficiencies in Air Force efforts to protect the property and remove safety and environmental hazards at the sites.

The report contains recommendations to you on pages 18 and 24. As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are sending copies of this report to the the Chairmen, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, House Committee on Government Operations, and Senate and House Committees on Appropriations and on Armed Services; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of the Interior; and the Administrator of General Services.

Sincerely yours,


Donald J. Horan
Director



D I G E S T

The Air Force has not adequately protected and maintained real and personal property at closed White Alice Communication System sites in Alaska. Long disposal delays have allowed property which originally cost millions of dollars to be lost or destroyed. Safety, chemical, and environmental hazards exist at the sites, which are not effectively secured and are therefore subject to trespass by the general public.

The White Alice Communication System was an extensive network of 69 sites that provided communications for Department of Defense activities in Alaska. The system represented an investment of over \$250 million in the mid- and late 1950s. In 1976, as part of a plan to replace the outdated system with a commercially owned and operated satellite communication network, the Air Force leased White Alice to Alascom, Inc. Shortly thereafter, Alascom began returning to the Air Force those White Alice sites and property that it did not need for the satellite communication system. By the start of fiscal year 1981, Alascom had returned 28 of the 69 sites. (See pp. 1 to 5.)

CONDITIONS AT CLOSED SITES

GAO visited seven closed sites and found that security at five sites is minimal and break-ins are common. No maintenance has been performed, much property is missing, and vandalism is extensive at six of the sites. In addition, the Air Force did not adequately prepare the property for storage; therefore, it is steadily deteriorating. (See ch. 2.)

Items of value are still at the sites. GAO found bulldozers, tank trucks, roadgraders, electronic test equipment, and furnaces that appeared to be still usable. Other equipment, supplies, and materials are there which might be used by the Air Force or some other agency or could be sold or donated. (See app. I.)

During site visits, GAO found large quantities of bulk fuels and dangerous chemicals, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at six sites. There had been a fuel spill at one site, and two showed evidence of PCB leakage. (See p. 9.)

GAO identified 1,719 gallons of PCBs, about 824 gallons of sulfuric acid, 1,057 gallons of 1,1,1, trichloroethane, and 506 pounds of sodium hydroxide. In and around the buildings there were open pits and easily accessible stairs leading to high roofs and tops of structures. These hazards, coupled with easy access, could result in environmental contamination and costly Government clean-up or personal injury. (See pp. 6 to 19.)

AIR FORCE PROPERTY DISPOSAL EFFORTS

At present, the Air Force does not intend to dispose of real property at colocated sites; that is, sites which are at, or close to, active military installations.

In 1977 the Alaskan Air Command developed a plan for removing personal property from colocated sites and later removed some supplies and equipment. But, according to the command, funding constraints in early 1980 effectively ended further property removal. To compensate for this, in the summer of 1980, the Air Force Logistics Command provided specially trained combat distribution teams to help the Alaskan Air Command pack and crate 291 tons of equipment at 11 colocated sites in about 1 month. However, much property remains there.

In view of the funding constraints, use of the teams may be an economical means for removing property from the sites. (See pp. 20 and 21.)

Disposal of real property at noncolocated sites can begin only after the real property is reported to a disposal agency. By law, the military must wait 30 days after making an excess report to the Congress before real property is reported to a disposal agency. As of August 1980, the Air Force had reported only one site as excess to the Congress. To reduce the number of separate reports, the Air Force wants to hold off reporting to the Congress until all sites are ready to be turned over to a disposal agency. This hold up in the start of disposal action has delayed intermediate

screening and approval actions by the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Land Management and will undoubtedly delay the entire disposal process. (See pp. 21 and 22.)

The disposal of personal property has been delayed because of disagreement between the Alaskan Air Command and the General Services Administration (GSA) over responsibility. Rather than following the standard procedure of removing personal property needed by the Air Force and reporting the remainder excess, the command requested and obtained Air Force Logistics Command authority to transfer all personal property along with excess real property to GSA for disposal.

This request was based on an Alaskan Air Command analysis which showed that it would not be cost effective to remove personal property from noncolocated sites and return it to the Air Force supply system. However, GAO found other information which showed that the value of some property actually removed was significantly more than the cost to return it to the Air Force supply system.

Although it initially agreed, GSA is now unwilling to assume disposal responsibility for the personal property. On the basis of its past experience with excess Federal property in Alaska, GSA anticipates a substantial delay before the excess real and personal property would be conveyed to it and believes it would be better for the Alaskan Air Command to dispose of the personal property. According to Air Force records, most of the personal property, which originally cost about \$3.7 million, still remains at the noncolocated sites. (See pp. 22 to 24.)

CONCLUSIONS

The Air Force could have avoided the hazardous conditions and much of the loss, destruction, deterioration, and vandalism to both real and personal property at the closed sites had it taken the following actions:

- Promptly disposed of personal property.
- Promptly reported the real property for disposal to reduce the period of time and the expense necessary to provide protection and maintenance.

--Provided adequate protection and maintenance to real and personal property until disposal is completed.

If the Air Force does not act soon to speed up the disposal of real and personal property at the sites, there will be little of value remaining.

No matter what the ultimate disposition of the real and personal property at these sites, the Air Force should promptly remove dangerous chemicals and contaminating materials and correct other safety hazards before harm to individuals or the environment occurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Air Force require the Alaskan Air Command to

- assure that White Alice sites are properly maintained until disposal is completed,
- rid sites of dangerous chemicals and environmental pollutants,
- inspect sites periodically to assure they are safe until disposal is completed,
- establish a time limit for reporting closed White Alice sites to the Congress,
- properly dispose of real and personal property as quickly as possible, and
- use combat distribution teams for returning property from White Alice sites when this is cost effective.

AIR FORCE COMMENTS
AND GAO EVALUATION

The Air Force agreed that, although Alaskan Air Command personal property removal and real property maintenance actions have been underway for several years, substantial problems remain. According to the Air Force, it is developing improvements that will result in a better plan for property disposal.

In doing so, the Air Force said it will emphasize removing dangerous materials and eliminating other safety and environmental hazards. And

it said it would inventory and identify personal property at the sites and attempt to determine the best method of disposal. The Air Force said it had notified the Congress on February 27, 1981, that 10 sites were to be closed and declared excess.

GAO believes these are appropriate steps. However, the Air Force should closely monitor these plans to assure that dangerous and contaminating materials are removed and safety hazards are eliminated as soon as possible. And there is much remaining to be done to complete the disposal of real and personal property at the sites. Because of the special problems of weather and remoteness in Alaska, GAO believes that the Air Force should act quickly on this matter during the summer of 1981. The Air Force's written comments were received on May 8, 1981, and are included as appendix III.

GSA AND INTERIOR COMMENTS

GSA and the Department of the Interior generally agreed with this report. (See apps. IV and V.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Alaskan Air Command
AFLC	Air Force Logistics Command
DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
GSA	General Services Administration
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyls

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1950s, the Department of Defense (DOD) considered the Alaskan communication system to be so weak and undependable that it jeopardized U.S. military defenses. In 1954 the U.S. Air Force requested that the American Telephone and Telegraph Company conduct a study for a complete communication network. Out of this study emerged the blueprint for project White Alice--a communication system consisting of 69 sites. (See map on p. 3.) In February 1955 the Air Force authorized project White Alice. It represented a DOD investment of over \$250 million and was the largest system of its kind ever undertaken.

On July 1, 1976, the Air Force leased White Alice to Alascom, Inc., as part of a plan to replace the outdated system with a commercially owned and operated satellite communication network. The network was considered less costly and more energy efficient than White Alice. Alascom also had the option to buy portions of White Alice for establishing the network.

In 1977 Alascom returned 28 of the 69 sites to the Air Force. Alascom also returned expendable and nonexpendable personal property at these sites, which originally cost the Air Force about \$7 million.

White Alice sites are either (1) colocated at or near active military radar installations or (2) noncolocated at places remote from active military radar installations. Of the 28 sites returned, 14 are colocated and 14 are noncolocated. At noncolocated sites, both real property (buildings and structures) and personal property (supplies and equipment) are to be disposed of. At colocated sites, only personal property is to be disposed of.

Property management procedures require that the Air Force try to find other ways to use its personal property before transferring the property to another agency for use or disposal. For real property with a value of more than \$100,000, the Air Force must notify the Congress of disposal plans and wait 30 days before reporting the property as available for transfer to another agency. The Army's Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management are involved in screening real property for other uses before turning it over to the General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal. Personal property may be transferred with real property to GSA if it is

AIR FORCE RESPONSIBILITY

Chapter 101 of the Federal Property Management Regulations outlines the Air Force's responsibility for real property and related personal property as follows:

"The holding agency shall retain custody and accountability for excess and surplus real property including related personal property and shall perform the physical care, handling protection, maintenance, and repairs of such property pending its transfer to another agency or its disposal. * * *"

The regulations also state that agencies holding such property will not report it to GSA as excess until after the Bureau of Land Management determines that the property is not suitable for return to the public domain. Thus, the amount of time an agency is required to maintain property depends on how fast the Bureau of Land Management does its job. This disposal process can take a long time. We previously reported 1/ on four cases in Alaska that had been in the disposal process from 8 to 11-1/2 years.

The Federal Property Management Regulations contain provisions for abandoning or destroying property. Concerning real property, the regulations state:

"* * * any Federal agency having control of real property which has no commercial value or of which the estimated cost of continued care and handling would exceed the estimated proceeds from its sale, is authorized: * * * To destroy government-owned improvements and related personal property located on government-owned land. Abandonment of such property is not authorized."

Concerning personal property, the regulations state:

"No property shall be abandoned, destroyed or donated by a Federal agency--unless a duly authorized official of that agency finds in writing, either that (1) such property has no commercial value, or (2) the estimated cost of its continued care and handling would exceed the estimated proceeds from its sale. * * *"

1/"Protection and Prompt Disposal Can Prevent Destruction of Excess Facilities in Alaska" (LCD-80-96, Sept. 12, 1980).

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

We made this review to find out how well real and personal property at excess White Alice sites in Alaska was being protected, how efficiently personal property was being removed and returned for use or sale, the condition of property after being at vacated sites for several years, and safety and environmental conditions at the sites.

We interviewed Air Force personnel and reviewed correspondence, internal audit reports, regulations, and files at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska, and Air Force Logistics Command, Dayton, Ohio. We interviewed officials at GSA relating to its involvement in White Alice property disposal. We also obtained recent correspondence relating to GSA's plans to participate in White Alice site disposals.

We visited 7 of the 28 sites returned to the Air Force (see app. I). Because we did not statistically select the sites visited, we cannot state that the conditions found at these sites are representative of all sites. In October 1980, about 3 months after our first visit, we revisited the Duncan Canal to determine the extent of trespass and the condition of real property.

The lack of reliable personal property records made it impractical for us to determine (1) the current value of property at the sites, (2) accurate property descriptions, and (3) whether it would now be cost effective to return the property to the Air Force supply system. But we tried to determine whether it might have been cost effective to remove personal property for redistribution at the time the sites were first returned to the Air Force. In doing this, we relied on our observations and the opinions of Defense Property Disposal Office and base supply officials.

We used our professional judgment to assess preservation and safety problems at the sites. These observations were made by a GAO employee with 10 years' chemical and industrial safety experience.

CHAPTER 2

CONDITIONS AT SEVEN SITES UNFAVORABLE

At the seven sites we visited, Government property costing millions of dollars had not been properly protected or maintained. Vandalism, theft, and deterioration have made much of this property worthless. Although all sites were affected by one or more of these unfavorable conditions, noncolocated sites were hit the hardest because access by unauthorized personnel is not controlled. Of the five noncolocated sites we visited, only one was secured. Large quantities of bulk fuel and dangerous chemicals, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), were at six sites. These chemicals were used to operate the sites, but like other property and supplies, they had been left behind and were improperly stored and unprotected. One site had already experienced a fuel spill, and two showed evidence of PCB leakage. Vapors from chemicals can be fatal, and acid compounds can cause severe burns. In addition, physical hazards, such as open pits in dark buildings, can cause personal injury or fatality. The consequences to both the Government and those coming in contact with such conditions could be serious.

SITES RANGE FROM ESSENTIALLY WORTHLESS TO GOOD

Within 20 months the Port Moller site, which cost the Government about \$6 million and, at the time Alascom returned it to the Air Force, contained about \$271,000 in personal property, had been so ravaged by the weather, vandals, and personnel who removed property without authorization, that it was almost worthless. On the other hand, the Big Mountain site was in good shape with only minor unauthorized removal of Government property and some weather damage. The remaining three noncolocated sites we visited--Port Heiden, North River, and Duncan Canal--were somewhere between these two extremes, as shown below.

	<u>Port Moller</u>	<u>Port Heiden</u>	<u>North River</u>	<u>Big Mountain</u>	<u>Duncan Canal</u>	<u>Cold Bay (note a)</u>	<u>Cape Romanzof (note a)</u>
Evidence of:							
Vandalism	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Unauthorized removal of Government property	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Trespass	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Abandoned vehicles	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Standing water in buildings	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Buildings were:							
Secured	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Maintained	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Weather tight	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

a/Colocated sites; unauthorized access better controlled because of their proximity to active installations.

We visited two colocated sites. Cold Bay is attached directly to an active military complex. Except for the communications and terminal equipment, personal property was either crated or had been shipped to Elmendorf. This site was in excellent condition.

The other site, Cape Romanzof, was 3 miles from an active military complex. This site had not been adequately maintained, and exposure to intense Aleutian-Bering sea storms had damaged the building and its contents.

Air Force Regulation 85-9, "Inactive Installations--Inactivation and Maintenance," contains procedures for the care of real property at closed facilities. We used this regulation as a guide to check items at six sites; we excluded Cold Bay. We found many instances of inadequate maintenance, as shown below.

<u>Description of items checked</u>	<u>No. of site occurrences</u>		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not applicable</u>
Site maintained		6	
Windows securely fastened	5	1	
Doors secured	1	5	
Fire extinguishers requiring special servicing removed		6	
Portable power tools packed in boxes		3	3
Drive belts removed		6	
Instruments and controls wrapped in waterproof paper		6	
Centrifugal pumps drained and shafts lubricated	1	5	
Electric motors cleaned, repaired, and wrapped		6	
Diesel engine oil system completely drained	1	5	
Batteries drained		5	1
Boilers drained and dried	3	3	
Firing end of oil burners wrapped		5	1
Oil burner valves, lines, and reservoirs drained	2	3	1
Hot water tanks drained	6		

PROTECTION AT NONCOLOCATED SITES INEFFECTIVE

Access by unauthorized personnel to the colocated sites we visited is limited because of their proximity to active military sites. The same cannot be said for four of the five noncolocated sites visited; Port Heiden was the only site requiring keys for building entry.

Each noncolocated site has a contract caretaker. Caretaker visits range from weekly at North River, Port Moller, and Port Heiden, to monthly at Big Mountain and Duncan Canal. From what we could see, caretakers do not prevent unauthorized removal of Government property or vandalism; they only report what has occurred.

A report, based on an Air Force Audit Agency audit, concluded in June 1980 that:

"* * * Action had been taken to safeguard the WACS [White Alice Communication System] sites by contracting for caretaker services at the isolated (noncolocated) sites and for Air Force surveillance at colocated sites. However, base supply and civil engineer personnel visiting the sites reported security was minimal. Break-ins at both isolated sites and protected colocated sites were common. Individuals assigned to protecting Air Force stations have removed supplies and equipment without prior approval from either the 21 TFW [Tactical Fighter Wing] or AAC [Alaskan Air Command] management. This was verified during our visit to Shemya AFB. Doors were found open, equipment items were found missing, and bins of supplies and other equipment were dumped into piles on the floor. At remote sites the incidence of break-ins has reportedly been greater especially at those sites in close proximity to civilian communities."

EVIDENCE OF VANDALISM

We saw evidence of vandalism at five of the seven sites we visited. Apparently, it has been occurring for some time as indicated from excerpts of caretaker reports to AAC.

--August 1979, Granite Mountain:

"* * * Main site buildings have been thoroughly ransacked and remain a mess. * * *"

--November 1979, North River:

"* * * This past summer some kids from the village took shotguns and shot holes in the doors at the site. * * *"

--November 1979, Port Moller:

"* * * Interior of the composite building is in extremely poor condition; vandals have taken all the fire extinguishers and sprayed their contents on the walls and floor. Additional damage from broken glass (hose stand covers, interior windows, booze bottles, etc.) and vandalism is evident through-out the building. Gauges on the power plant switch gear have been smashed, supplies and equipment that remain are scattered and broken or at least not in usable condition. * * *"

--January 1980, Port Heiden:

"There has been a breakin. Some destructive vandalism. Broken light bulbs, fixtures, scattered paper, etc., 16-mm. projector missing. Two tool boxes and some hand tools missing. Plywood removed from front of door."

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

We found 1,728 gallons of PCBs at the sites we visited. PCBs are harmful because, once released into the environment, they do not break apart. They accumulate in the tissues of living organisms, and their concentration increases as they move up the food chain toward humans. These facts are significant because laboratory research has shown that, even in very low concentrations, PCBs can cause long-term toxic effects in many species.

At the sites we visited, 55 gallons of PCBs were in 5-gallon cans; the remaining PCBs were in transformers. At Ducan Canal and at Big Mountain, the transformers were leaking. We also found a PCB test kit at Big Mountain.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published its final PCB ban rule, based on the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, in the May 31, 1979, Federal Register. Among other things, this ban prohibits using PCBs after July 2, 1979, except when totally enclosed. Transformers containing PCBs can be used as long as they perform their intended functions and do not leak PCBs into the environment.

The PCBs in 5-gallon cans were not in a totally enclosed system, and some transformers were leaking. Further, none of the transformers were being used to perform their intended purpose. Therefore, it is possible that people entering these sites may be exposed unknowingly to PCBs that have leaked from the transformers, may open transformer drain valves, or may empty the 5-gallon cans containing PCBs.

DANGEROUS CHEMICALS

Each site we visited, except Cold Bay, contained dangerous chemicals. (See table on p. 10.) If there is a demand for these products elsewhere in the Air Force, supply management procedures indicate that they can be redistributed and used. But because they are hazardous, special storage and handling procedures are required. Strict controls and restrictions govern disposal of these products. The Air Force has primary responsibility for their proper disposal.

Dangerous chemicals (see photograph on p. 11) should be removed as soon as possible. This is particularly critical at noncolocated sites, where we found evidence of frequent unauthorized entry. In the event of an accident, no water is available for washing off chemicals, and the sites' remoteness prevents adequate treatment or prompt medical attention.

Chemicals at White Alice Sites

<u>Site</u>	<u>Chemical description</u>	<u>Quantity at site</u>	<u>Health hazard category (note a)</u>
Big Mountain	Sodium hydroxide	16 pounds	3
	Quick dry spray paint	2 pounds	3
	Hydrochloric acid	8 gallons	3
	Sulfuric acid	<u>b/</u> 108 gallons	3
	Sodium bisulfate	1 pound	2
	1,1,1, trichloroethane	23 gallons	2
	Methyl butyl ketone	2 gallons	2
	Methylene chloride	6 gallons	2
	Xylol	1 gallon	2
Cape Romanzof	Hydrochloric acid	10 pounds	3
	Sulfuric acid	<u>b/</u> 95 pounds	3
	Sodium hydroxide	198 pounds	3
	Sodium sulfide	100 pounds	2
	Calcium hypochloride	44 pounds	1
Duncan Canal	Sulfuric acid	<u>b/</u> 56 gallons	3
	Potassium hydroxide	2 gallons	3
	1,1,1, trichloroethane	715 gallons	2
	Oxalic acid	<u>c/</u> 15 pounds	1
North River	Sulfuric acid	<u>b/</u> 276 gallons	3
	Sodium hydroxide	67 pounds	3
	Cresylic acid	25 gallons	3
	1,1,1, trichloroethane	192 gallons	2
	Xylol	1 gallon	2
Port Heiden	Sodium hydroxide	125 pounds	3
	Sulfuric acid	<u>b/</u> 289 gallons	3
	Hydrochloric acid	21 quarts	3
	1,1,1, trichloroethane	40 gallons	2
	Calcium hypochloride	280 pounds	1
	Sodium hypochloride	210 gallons	1
	Calcium hypochloride	280 pounds	1
	Carbon remover	15 gallons	1
Port Moller	Sodium hydroxide	100 pounds	3
	1,1,1, trichloroethane	87 gallons	2
	Sodium flouride	125 pounds	2
	Calcium hypochloride	100 pounds	1

a/Categories:

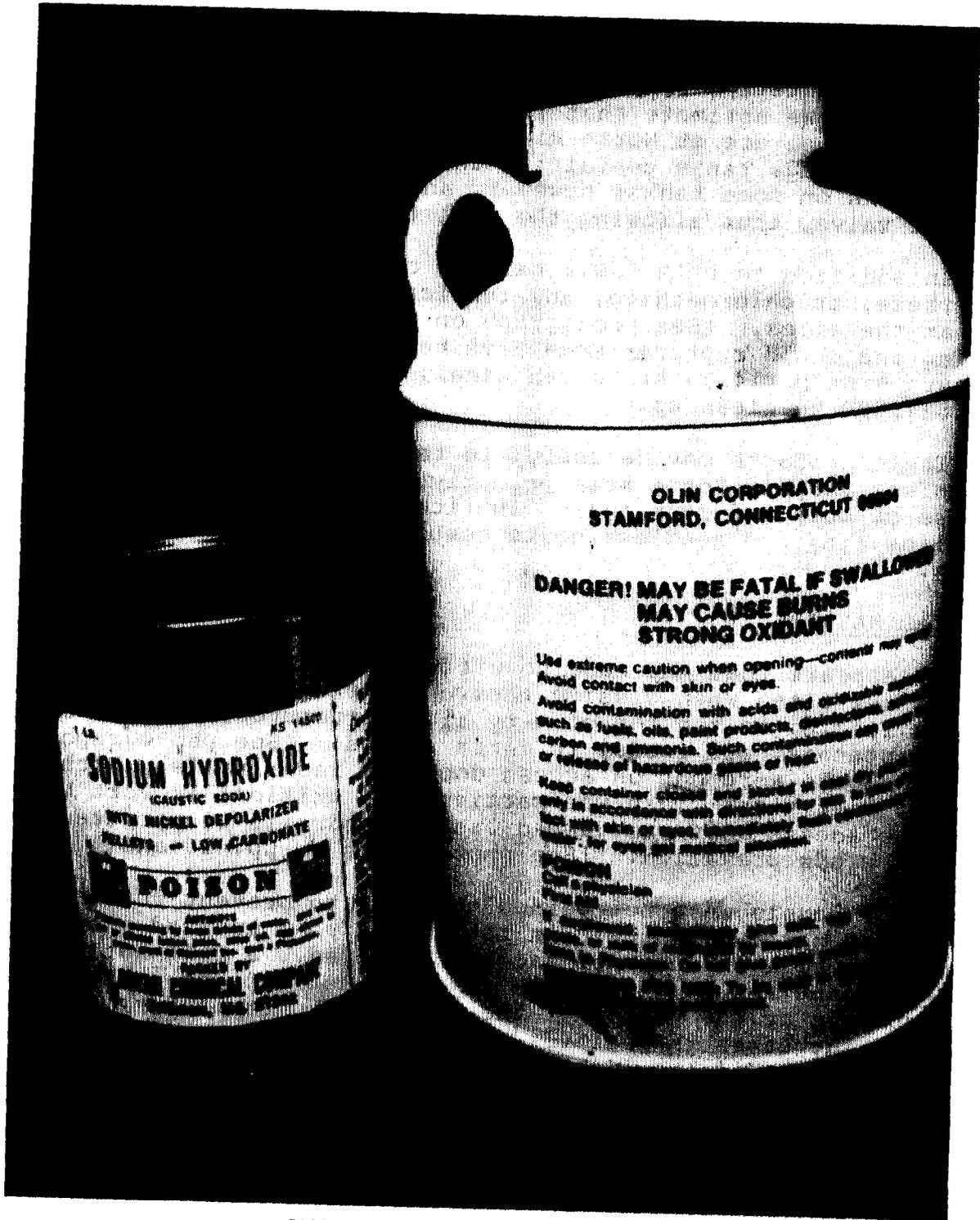
3--Materials which on very short exposure could cause serious, temporary, or residual injury even though prompt medical treatment is given.

2--Materials which on intense or continued exposure could cause temporary incapacitation or possible residual injury unless prompt medical attention is given.

1--Materials which on exposure would cause irritation but only minor residual injury even if no treatment is given.

b/Includes estimated sulfuric acid in batteries.

c/Highly toxic if ingested.



CHEMICALS AT PORT HEIDEN.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AT NONCOLOCATED
SITES REPRESENT A POTENTIAL
ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD

Large quantities of petroleum products were left at noncolocated sites. We estimate that 100,000 and 47,500 gallons of bulk diesel fuel are at North River and Big Mountain, respectively. The large storage tanks containing the diesel fuel were not locked. We put locks on some tanks; however, anyone can break them and open the valve, thus allowing the fuel to spill.

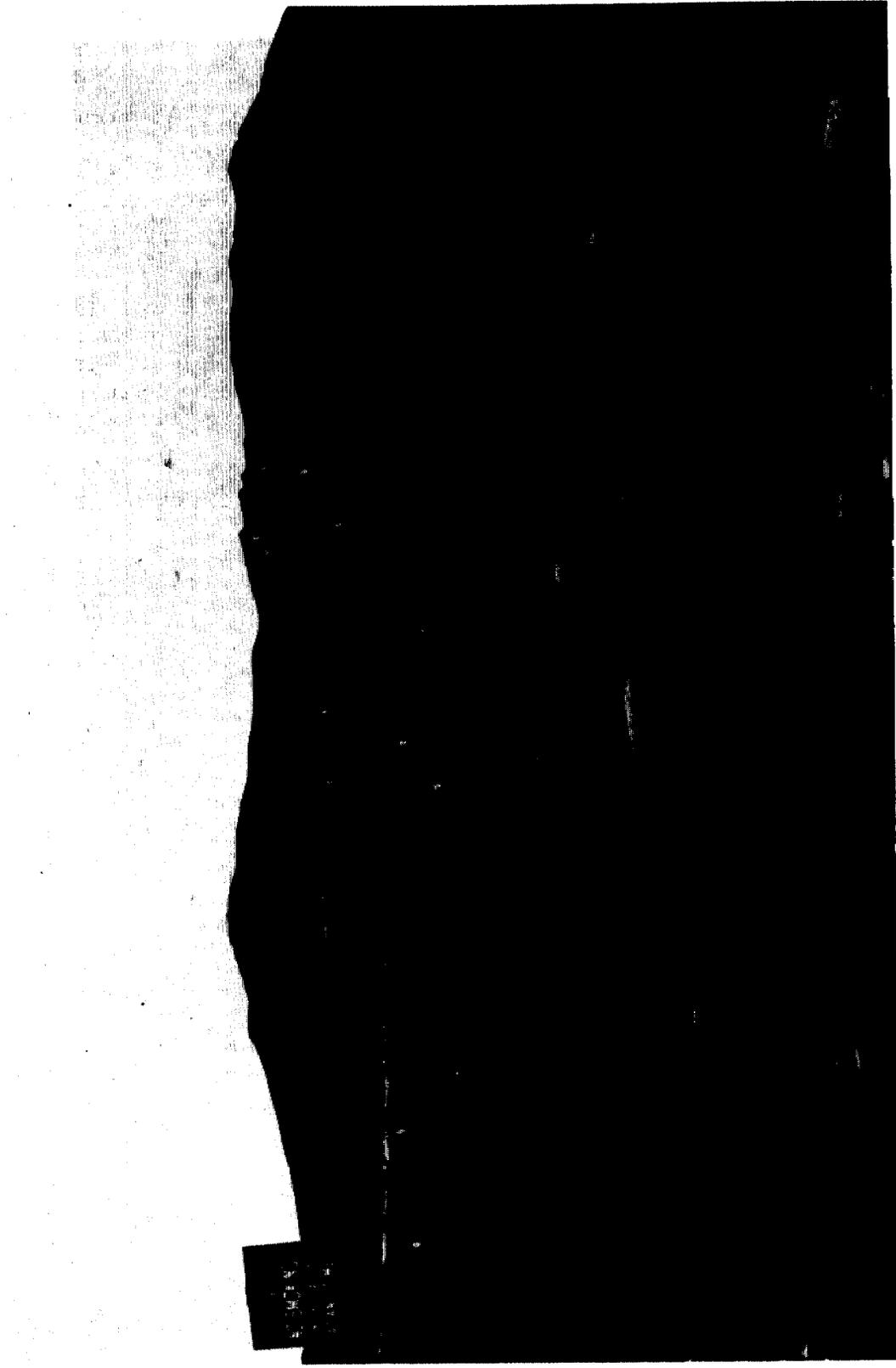
In addition to bulk fuel, barrels of diesel fuel, gasoline, antifreeze, trichloroethane, and lubricating oil are stored outside at the sites. (See photograph on p. 13.) These barrels are rusting and could rupture; some have been vandalized. (See photograph on p. 14.) At Duncan Canal, there was a spill which cost \$27,500 to clean up.

These products may be useful to the Air Force or could be sold. But unless the Air Force acts promptly to remove or properly dispose of bulk and drum fuels, lubricants, and chemicals, it risks both liability and needless costs resulting from environmental damage.

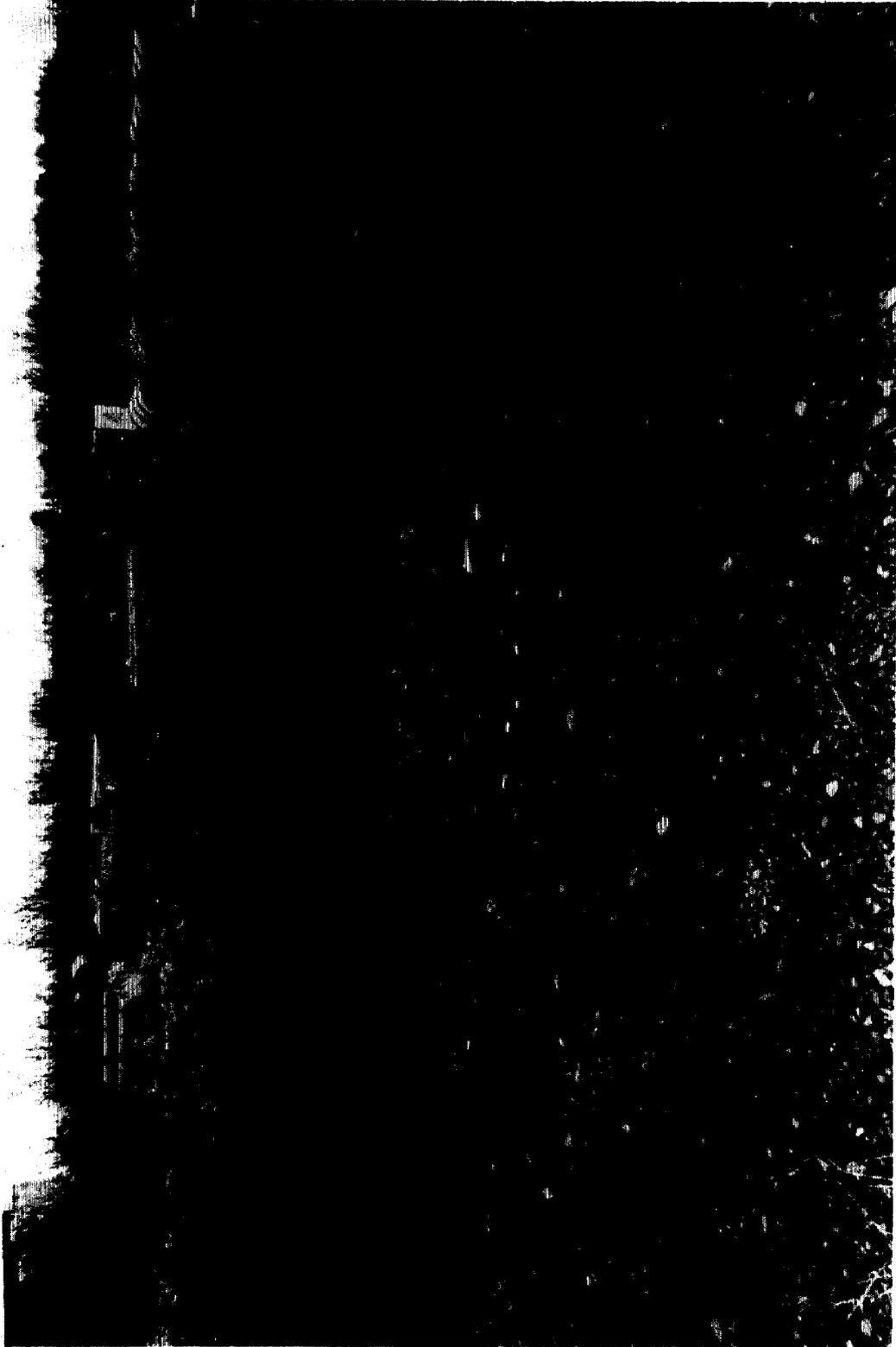
PHYSICAL HAZARDS

It appears that AAC made no effort to minimize physical hazards at the sites when closing them. For example, it did not cut ladders leading to the top of very high structures, such as oil tanks, antennas, and roofs, to limit access. (See photograph on p. 15.) Locks were not on access doors to radar roofs, which are about 80 feet high. This was particularly critical at Port Moller, where the access door was jammed open, guardrails were rotted, and high winds prevailed. (See photographs on pp. 16 and 17.)

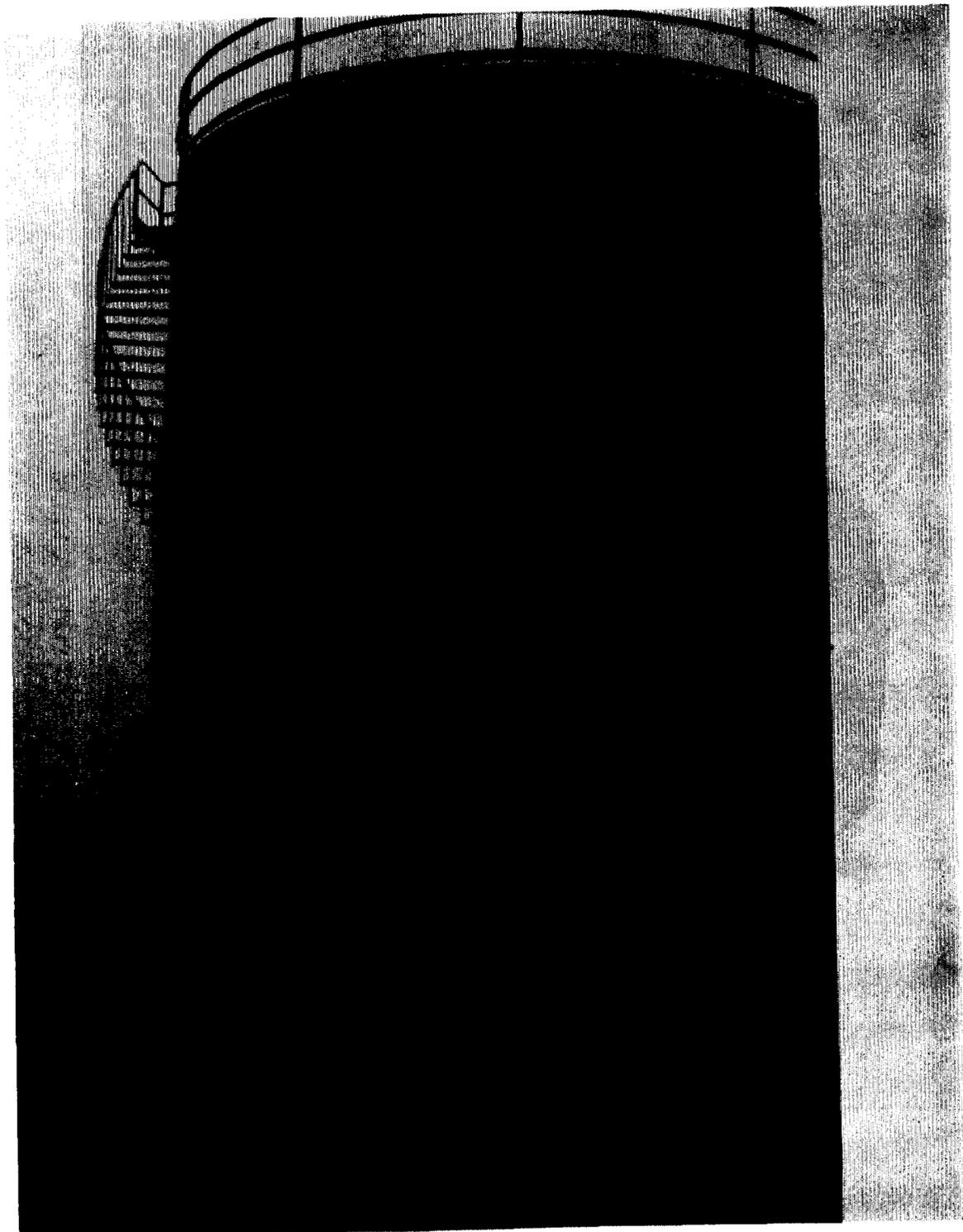
Floor panels were not welded together to prevent removal. At Duncan Canal a 6-foot pit in the engine room created a safety hazard because a floor panel had been removed. A fall into this would no doubt result in serious injury because pipes, motors, and pumps are at the bottom of the pit. Darkness inside the buildings increases the hazards since most windows are boarded and there are no inside lights.



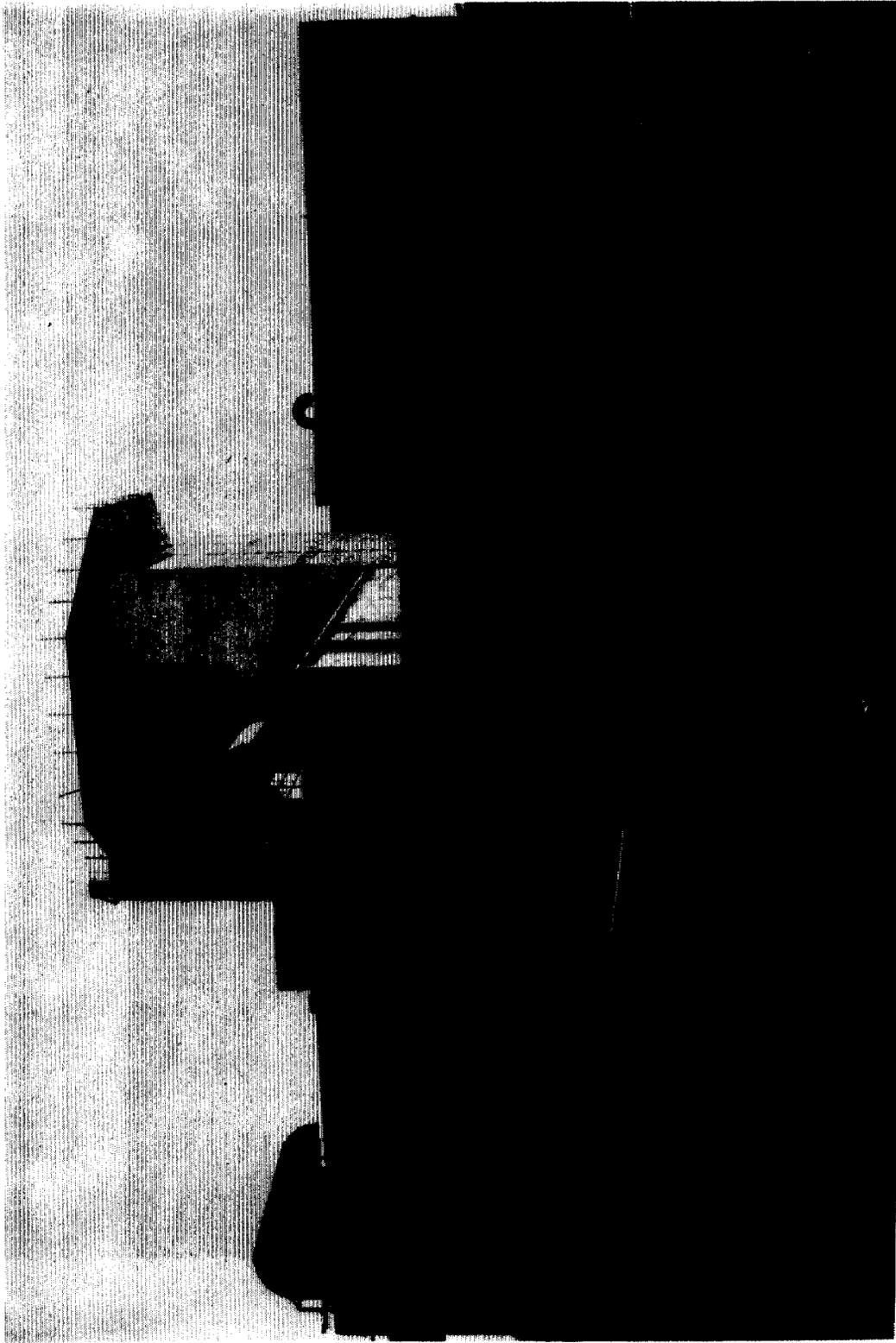
PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AT BIG MOUNTAIN.



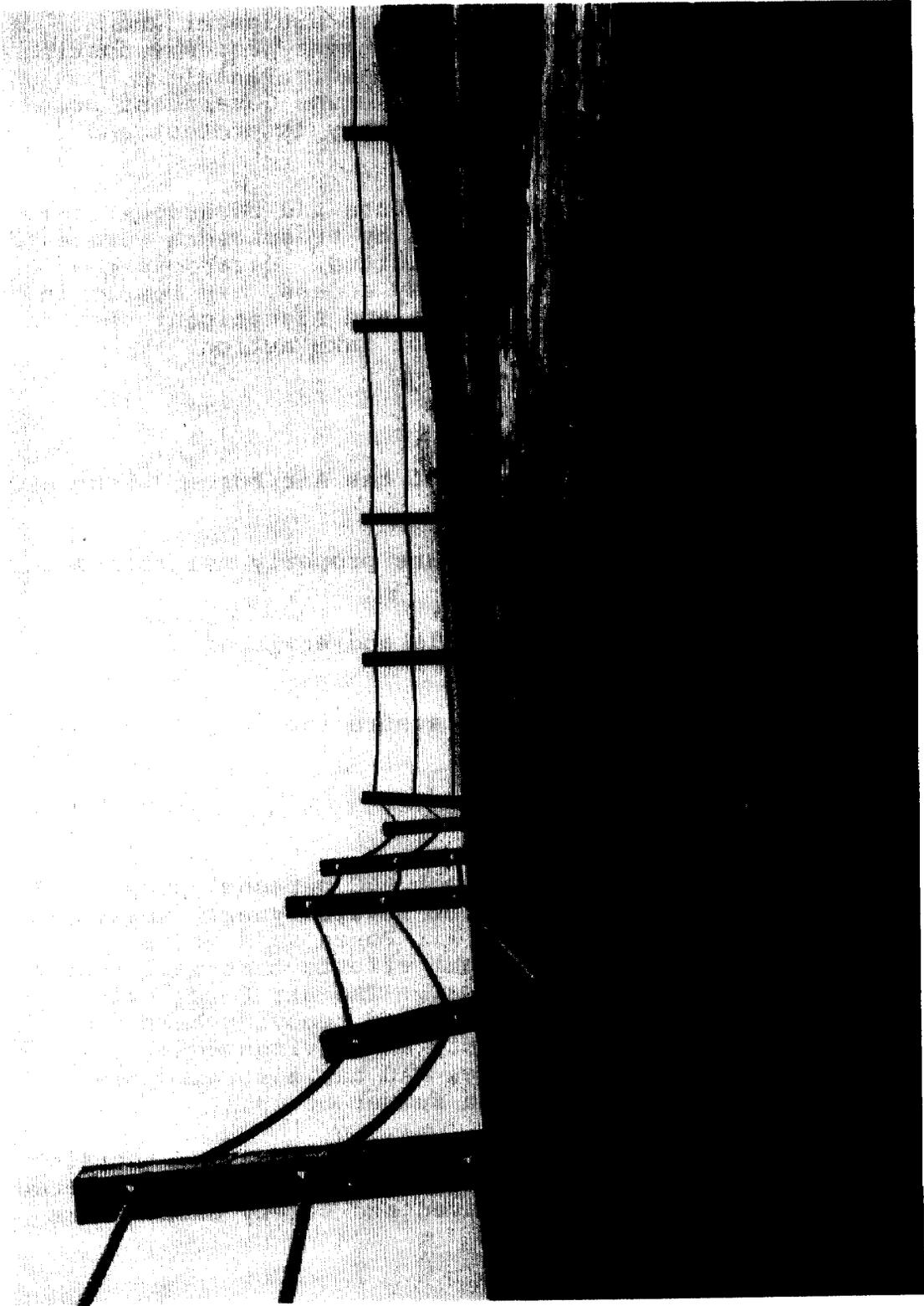
A SPILL CAUSED BY VANDALS AT NORTH RIVER.



FUEL TANK AT DUNCAN CANAL.



RADAR TOWER AT PORT MOLLER.



UNSAFE RAILINGS ON RADAR TOWER AT PORT MOLLER.

CONCLUSIONS

AAC has failed to protect and maintain property at closed White Alice sites and has failed to prepare equipment and supplies for storage. As a result, Government property costing millions of dollars has been lost or damaged. Vandalism and exposure to weather will continue to cause Government property to deteriorate unless AAC acts promptly to protect and maintain property at the sites.

Large quantities of petroleum products and hazardous chemicals are at the sites. Frequent visits by trespassers were evident at most of the noncolocated sites we visited. Hazardous chemicals and unsafe conditions, coupled with easy access, may result in personal injury or environmental damage and significant cost to the Government if the Air Force does not take action.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force direct AAC to

- assure that White Alice sites are properly maintained until disposal is completed,
- rid sites of dangerous chemicals and environmental pollutants, and
- inspect sites periodically to assure they are safe until disposal is completed.

AIR FORCE COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

The Air Force agreed that although AAC personal property removal actions have been underway for several years, substantive problems remain. However, the Air Force said it is developing improvements to the current efforts that will result in a better plan for property disposal. The Air Force said it will emphasize identifying, packaging, and removing hazardous materials and eliminating other safety and environmental hazards. According to the Air Force, AAC has allocated over \$400,000 for such actions during the summer of 1981.

We believe these are appropriate steps. However, the Air Force should closely monitor these plans to assure that dangerous and contaminating materials are removed and safety hazards are eliminated as soon as possible.

GSA AND INTERIOR COMMENTS

GSA did not comment specifically on the safety or pollution conditions at the sites, but it encouraged the Air Force to act quickly on property disposal to avoid further deterioration.

Interior said that our recommendations for curtailing further deterioration and destruction of improvements and personal property and for eliminating hazards to the public are appropriate.

CHAPTER 3

AIR FORCE PROPERTY DISPOSAL EFFORTS

U.S. Government real and personal property which originally cost millions of dollars is being destroyed or lost because the Air Force has failed to dispose of it promptly. AAC said that inadequate funding has hampered efforts to remove personal property at colocated White Alice sites. Also, AAC did not fund the removal of personal property (which cost about \$3.7 million according to Air Force records) at noncolocated sites. GSA originally agreed to dispose of the personal property as well as the real property at these noncolocated sites. But because of an expected delay in transferring the real property to GSA, it is now unwilling to assume responsibility for the personal property. GSA has advised the Air Force to dispose of the personal property as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the property is deteriorating because the Air Force is waiting until all noncolocated sites are ready for disposal before reporting them to the Congress.

LIMITED FUNDS HAMPER EFFORTS TO REMOVE PROPERTY

In May 1979 AAC prepared Program Action Directive 77-202 to dispose of closed White Alice sites. The directive outlined the responsibilities of Air Force organizations for disposing of property at the sites, established a schedule for those actions, and showed anticipated costs and funding. Organizations used this directive to plan their disposal actions.

Personal property at noncolocated sites was to be transferred to GSA with the real property for disposal. Personal property at colocated sites was to be shipped to Elmendorf or sold on site by the Defense Property Disposal Office. But, according to AAC, inadequate funding has delayed the disposal of personal property at colocated sites.

AAC has not assigned the White Alice property disposal program a high funding priority. In fiscal year 1979 AAC spent \$240,000 of its operation and maintenance funds for disposal of White Alice property, leaving \$352,000 unfunded. For fiscal year 1980 this program received priority number 37 of 43 categories. As of August 29, 1980, AAC had spent \$212,000 of its operation and maintenance funds, leaving \$480,000 unfunded. For fiscal year 1981 AAC planned no disposal expenditures, leaving \$515,000 unfunded.

Funds became so low in fiscal year 1980 that the AAC group responsible for disposing of personal equipment at colocated sites reported on February 14, 1980, that inadequate funding had virtually eliminated all efforts to remove additional assets from field locations. The group requested that it be formally relieved from the directive's requirements.

DISPOSAL AT COLOCATED SITES

In April 1980, the Commander, Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC), Dayton, Ohio, visited AAC. An AAC official told us that the White Alice disposal problem was discussed and the commander recommended that AAC consider using AFLC's combat distribution teams to pack and crate the personal property at the colocated sites.

Each team is composed of six people with supply and packaging skills and is specifically trained in manual property distribution. Several teams can be combined if necessary, and their skills can be tailored to satisfy the specific requirements of any location.

On May 3, 1980, AAC requested four teams to assemble, pack, and crate personal property for shipment. Between June 23 and July 24, 1980, the teams prepared 291 tons of equipment at 11 sites. The total transportation and per diem cost for the teams was \$35,904.22. Neither AFLC nor ACC determined whether using the teams was economical. But in view of the teams' effectiveness and AAC's funding constraints, we think their use is a viable option.

DISPOSAL AT NONCOLOCATED SITES

In December 1977 AAC requested AFLC's authority to transfer personal property, as well as real property, at noncolocated sites to GSA for disposal. In January 1978 AFLC granted approval primarily on the basis of costs AAC had incurred to redistribute property from the White Alice Ocean Cape site. A summary of the actual costs to remove property from the Ocean Cape site showed that personal property valued at \$30,135 was redistributed at a cost of \$19,821. According to the summary, the only valuable items were six Klystron tubes, one voltmeter, and two signal generators.

However, the AAC project officer's trip report indicated a different result. It showed that 167 line items weighing 10 tons and valued at about \$214,000 had been removed from the site and returned to Elmendorf Air Force Base. We could not verify this because of inadequate records. But, according to a September 1977 Air Force Audit Agency report, property valued at \$165,000 was entered into Elmendorf's base-level supply system. The auditors were unable to account for 84 line items valued at \$49,000.

In view of this, we question AAC's basis for concluding that the personal property at the noncolocated sites was not worth removing. Since the original decision to transfer the personal property to GSA, AAC has done little to protect or remove it, and much of it has been lost or damaged.

AAC HAS DELAYED REPORTING
NONCOLOCATED PROPERTY

The law (10 U.S.C. 2662) requires military services to wait 30 days after notifying the Congress before reporting real property as excess to a disposal agency. Thus, delayed reporting means delayed disposal.

As of August 29, 1980, the noncolocated sites that Alascom returned to the Air Force (except the Duncan Canal site) during 1977, 1978, and 1979 have not been reported to the Congress. An Air Force official told us that, to reduce the number of separate reports, the Air Force plans to wait until all sites are ready for disposal before reporting. He told us that a report would go to the Congress in early 1981. The effect of waiting means that disposal will not start until 1981, more than 3 years after closing some sites.

GSA REFUSES TO ACCEPT PERSONAL
PROPERTY BECAUSE OF ANTICIPATED DELAY

In mid-1980, GSA informed AAC that it was no longer willing to accept, for disposal, unrelated personal property at noncolocated sites. GSA apparently was concerned about an expected delay in receiving the real property from the Air Force. Because of this delay, GSA believed that disposal of unrelated personal property (property other than that required to maintain the land and structures in a usable condition) would be more effectively handled by the Air Force.

AAC said that virtually all of the personal property could be viewed as related. AAC again said that the small quantity of unrelated property would not be worth returning to Elmendorf.

In October 1980 we were told that AAC, GSA, and the Defense Property Disposal Office at Elmendorf were considering a plan for transfer and/or onsite sale of personal property at noncolocated sites. Basically, the plan called for AAC to prepare a list of the personal property at noncolocated sites. AAC was to retain accountability for the personal property and guarantee that it would be available for delivery. Using the list to find agencies interested in the property, the Disposal Office was to canvass DOD agencies; GSA was to canvass other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and qualified nonprofit organizations. Finally, the Disposal Office would attempt to sell the remaining personal property onsite. This disposal plan should have been developed before the sites were closed and implemented as soon as possible after the sites were vacated.

RETURN OF PERSONAL PROPERTY
APPARENTLY COST EFFECTIVE

We tried to determine whether it would still be cost effective to return the sites' personal property to the Air Force supply system. But property records were too unreliable

to determine this. We then tried to determine whether it would have been cost effective to return personal property when Alascom first returned the 28 sites. In doing so, we reviewed AAC files, interviewed AAC and disposal office officials, and visited seven of the sites. (See app. I.)

An AAC official estimated the average cost to prepare and return personal property to AAC's supply system or the disposal office to be \$102,000 a site. A disposal official estimated the value of recoverable precious metals at Cold Bay to be \$10,280 in gold, \$2,178 in silver, and \$1,925 in copper. But he said Cold Bay was not typical. He said other sites contained two or three times the precious metals at Cold Bay. An Elmendorf Air Force Base supply official estimated that about 40 percent of the expendable items previously returned from the sites were used at Elmendorf. According to Air Force property records, the estimated average expendable personal property at the sites we visited was about \$104,000 a site at the time they were returned to the Air Force.

At four sites we found a total of 37 Lennox furnaces that appeared to be in good condition. A manufacturer's representative told us the present value of the furnaces is about \$6,000 each for a total value of about \$222,000. In addition, we found bulldozers, tank trucks, roadgraders, and electronic test equipment. At one site, we were able to locate property which originally cost over \$260,000 and found more property not even on the property records. (See app. I.)

It appears that it would have been cost effective to return personal property from the sites soon after they were closed. But because of the deterioration and unauthorized removal of personal property since then, it may not now be cost effective. This is something the Air Force should determine as soon as possible.

The Air Force has a number of alternatives to returning the personal property: transferring it to Federal, State, or local government agencies and nonprofit organizations; selling it onsite; or destroying it onsite.

At Port Heiden, Big Mountain, and North River, individuals expressed interest in purchasing personal property at the sites. Also, the mayor of Port Heiden asked us to assist him in transferring some personal property that the village needed. In view of this local interest, onsite sale or donation of personal property may be a less costly alternative than returning the property to Elmendorf for disposal. Because the condition of personal property at each site is different (see app. I), the best method of disposal must be decided on a site-by-site basis. Even at this late date, some value should be realized from the property.

If AAC delays this property disposal longer than necessary, the result will be further destruction and loss of Government property.

REAL PROPERTY

We do not know the present value of real property at any of the closed sites. An Air Force real property specialist told us that the buildings at Duncan Canal were commercially appraised on November 9, 1976. The appraiser estimated the value of the real property at \$16,000 and estimated its salvage value at \$5,559. In our opinion, the cost to maintain and protect Duncan Canal until its disposal will probably exceed \$16,000. For example, the U.S. Army has contracted for guard services at two closed Nike sites in Alaska at an annual cost of \$212,509. Because of the high cost to protect and maintain these facilities, the Air Force should proceed as quickly as possible to expedite their disposal.

CONCLUSIONS

Low priority and insufficient funds have limited AAC's efforts to promptly remove personal property from the colocated White Alice sites. But, AFLC's combat distribution teams seems to have been successful in preparing personal property for removal.

At the close of our audit in October 1980, AAC was still insisting that GSA dispose of unrelated personal property at non-colocated sites. Regardless of who assumes responsibility for the property, one factor cannot be overlooked: real and personal property at these sites is not being protected. This is an AAC responsibility and delay because of low priority or because of disagreement is contributing to further loss and destruction. If there is extensive further delay little doubt exists that nothing of value will remain at these sites. Because of the high cost to protect and maintain real property, it is essential that AAC proceed as quickly as possible to make this property available for disposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force require AAC to

--establish a time limit for reporting closed White Alice sites to the Congress,

--properly dispose of real and personal property as quickly as possible, and

--use combat distribtuion teams for returning property from White Alice sites when this is cost effective.

AIR FORCE COMMENTS AND
OUR EVALUATION

The Air Force agreed that it had substantial property disposal problems as identified in this report. According to the Air Force, it had already taken some action on our recommendations. For example, it said that on February 27, 1981, it notified the Congress that 10 sites were to be closed and declared excess. The Air Force said that it would inventory and identify personal property at the sites and attempt to determine the best method of disposal.

We believe these are appropriate initial steps. However, much remains to be done to complete the disposal of real and personal property at the sites. Because of the special problems of weather and remoteness in Alaska, we believe that the Air Force should act quickly on this matter and attempt to do as much as possible during the summer of 1981. The Air Force's written comments were received on May 8, 1981, and are enclosed as appendix III.

GSA AND INTERIOR COMMENTS
AND OUR EVALUATION

GSA said it has done a preliminary screening of the real property at 13 sites on the basis of preliminary reports from the Air Force. According to GSA, it will assist with the disposal of personal property after it is properly reported by the Air Force. GSA said it endorsed our recommendation that the property be reported promptly to avoid further loss and waste.

Interior said our recommendations for curtailing further deterioration and destruction of improvements and personal property at White Alice sites are appropriate. It identified some of the screening procedures that are necessary before conveyance of property is completed. And although processing is being given priority as a result of our recent report, Interior estimates that the entire process can take 3 years.

We believe these comments reinforce the need for the Air Force to act promptly on property disposal. Delay extends the disposal period and the time during which care and protection of the property are needed.

GSA's written comments were received on March 30, 1981, and are enclosed as appendix IV. Interior's written comments were received on March 31, 1981, and are enclosed as appendix V.

WHITE ALICE SITES VISITEDPORT MOLLER

The Port Moller site is located on the Alaska Peninsula about 525 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska. A fish processing plant, employing about 150 people during the peak fishing season, is near the site. An access road runs from the site to the fish processing plant and a nearby airstrip.

Air Force records show that expendable and nonexpendable property costing \$271,000 was at the site. The 28,051-square-foot radio relay facility at Port Moller cost \$3,414,000 in 1958. Almost nothing of value remained at the site.

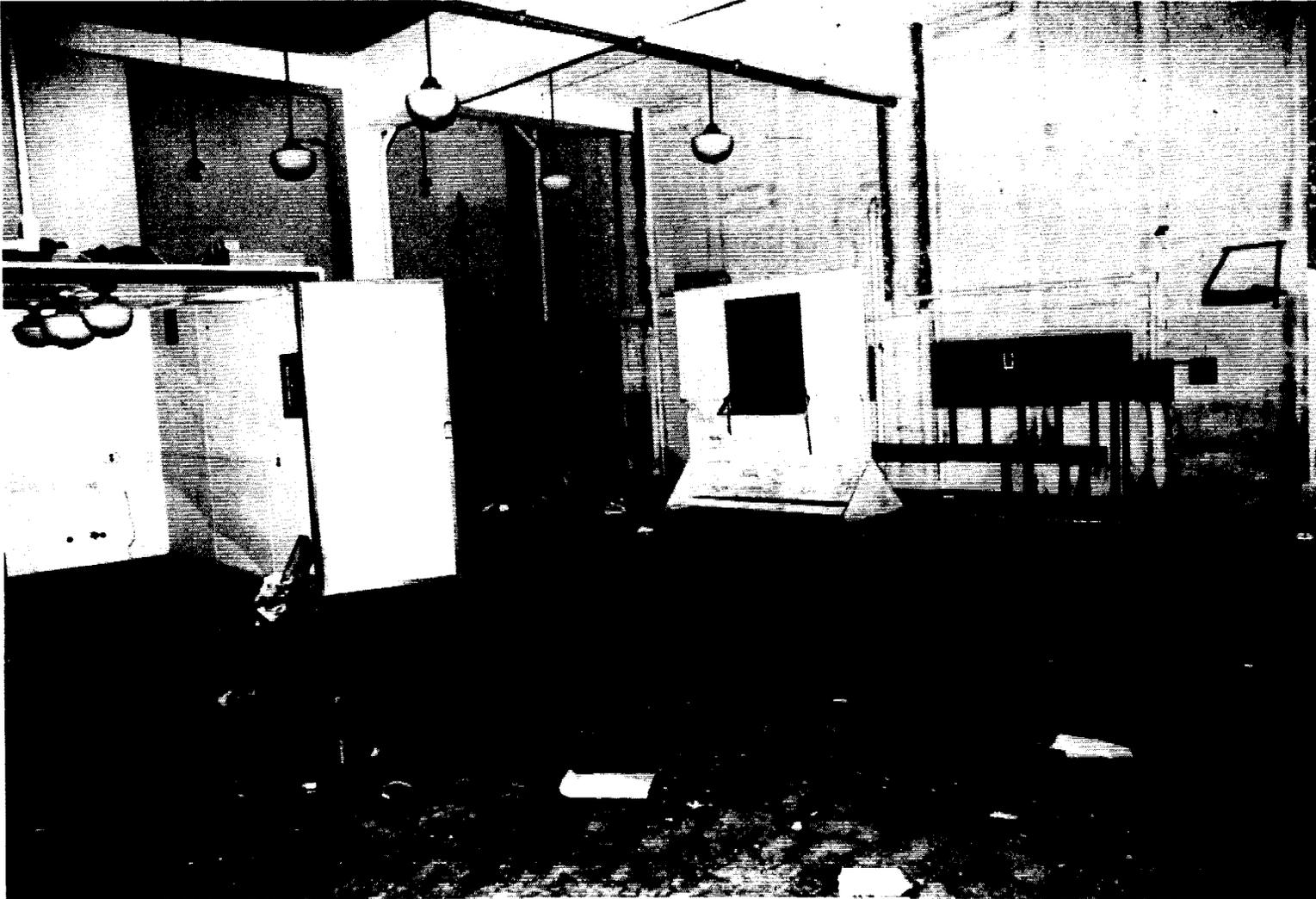
According to two individuals who had worked at the site, it was in excellent condition when it was closed. The individual who was chief mechanic when the site was closed said that, except for a dump truck, the equipment was in good condition. This equipment included a scraper, a bulldozer, an end loader, two track masters, and several pickup trucks. He told us that the equipment is now worthless.

All the windows at the site were broken and doors were open, permitting easy access to the buildings. The interiors of the buildings were in extremely poor condition. Paint was peeling from walls and ceilings, and water was standing in many rooms. To repair damage done to the buildings' interiors at this site would be pointless. In our opinion, due to extensive damage caused by vandals and the elements, to restore this site would not be economical. (See photographs on pp. 27 and 28.)

Nearly every usable piece of equipment and all tools, tables, chairs, bedding, and furniture had either been removed or ruined. We checked selected personal property items on the Air Force inventory and found all vehicles at the site, but, as stated, they were worthless. Missing items included chairs, beds, and mattresses; a griddle; a deepfat fryer; a meat slicer; a toaster; 2 coffeemakers; an oscilloscope; 2 tube testers; 10 electric drills; 3 tap and die sets; 2 micrometers; 3 typewriters; a motion picture projector; a pool table; and 2 mobile radios. We did locate a few items, such as a shuffle board, but they were worthless. The only personal property items which appeared salvageable were a commercial washer and dryer.



BEDROOM AT PORT MOLLER.



STANDING WATER IN GYMNASIUM AT PORT MOLLER.

PORT HEIDEN

The Port Heiden site is located about 440 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska, on the Alaska Peninsula. The village of Port Heiden is about 4 miles from the site. Air Force records show that expendable and nonexpendable property costing over \$253,000 was at the site. The 28,051-square-foot radio relay facility at Port Heiden cost \$2,994,000 to build in 1958.

Although we saw evidence of trespass, unauthorized removal of Government property, and minor vandalism, the site generally was in excellent condition. (See photograph on p. 30.) Many spare parts and supplies, such as valves, tires, electric motors, powerstat variable transformers, and instruments, remained at the site. (See photographs on pp. 31 and 32.) Most of the handtools and small power tools had been removed from the site, but valuable major tools and equipment remained.

NORTH RIVER

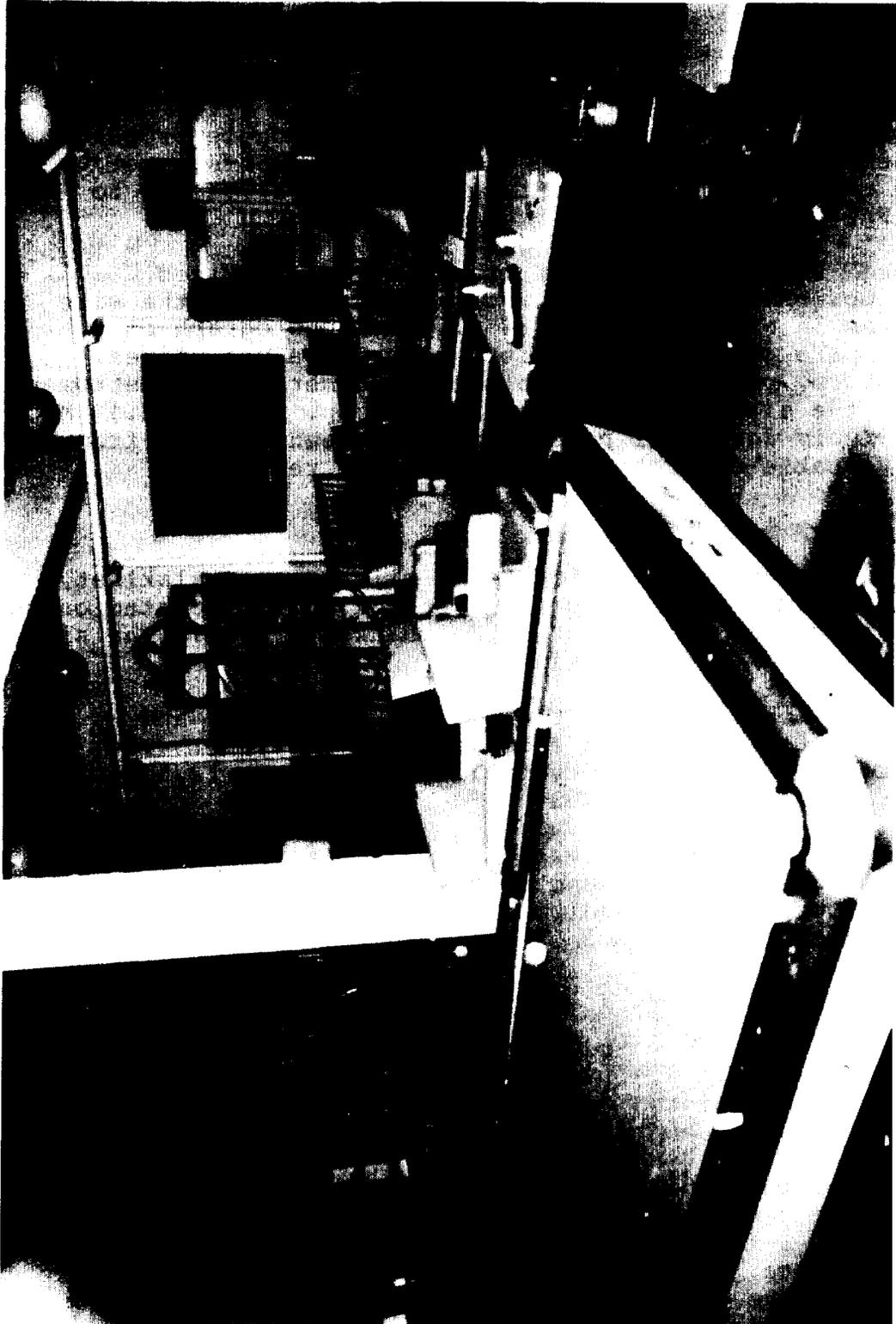
The North River site is located 8 miles from Unalakleet, Alaska, which has a population of about 632 and is located on the Bering Sea about 385 miles west of Fairbanks, Alaska. The site is accessible by road from Unalakleet.

Air Force records showed the cost of expendable and nonexpendable property at the site was over \$174,000. The telecommunication and dormitory facilities contain 12,530 square feet and cost \$1,364,753.

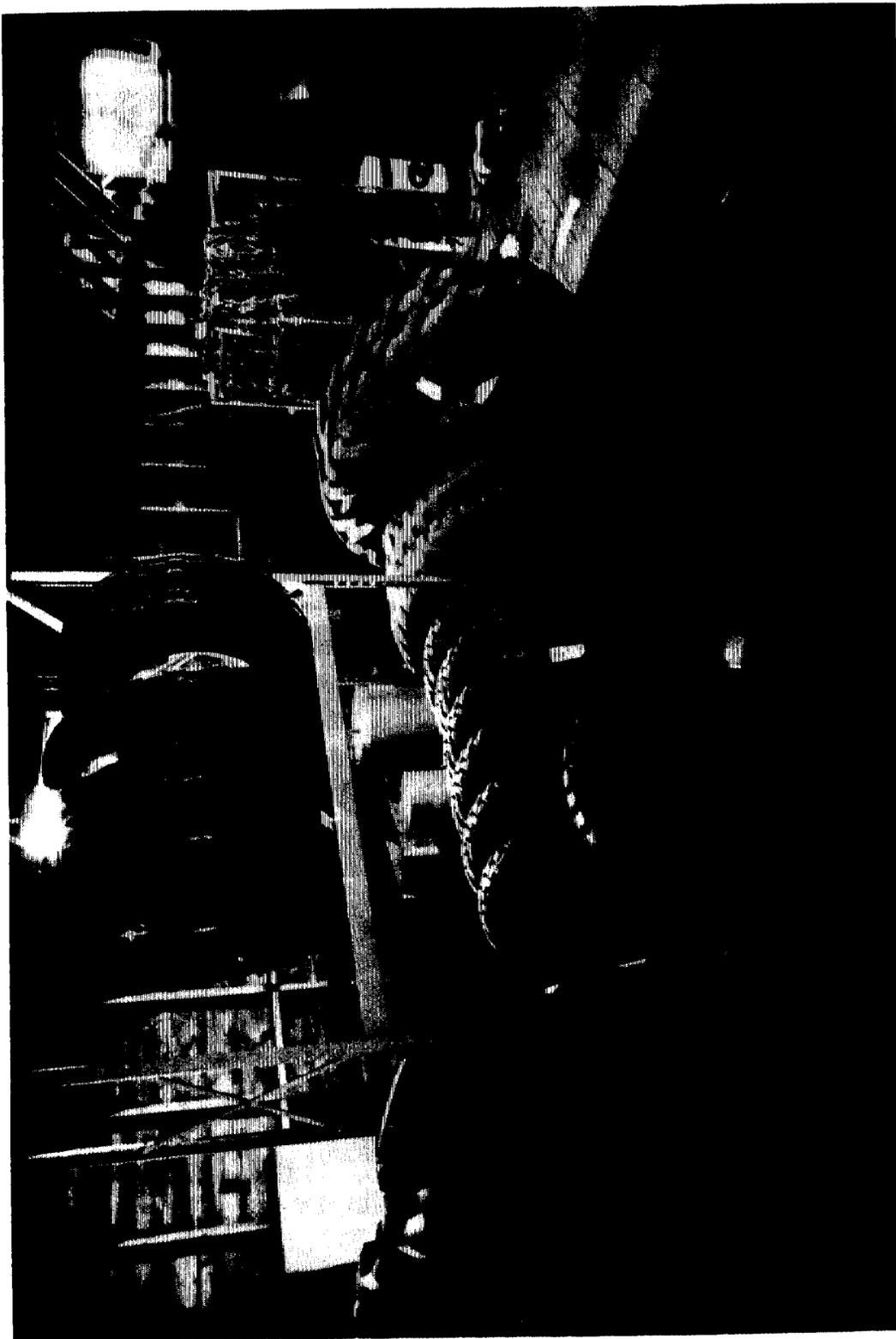
Minor vandalism and removal of Government property had occurred at the site. All handtools were missing, along with most electronic test equipment. Most of the kitchen equipment and chairs and some of the furniture were missing.

The weather had damaged the buildings. For example, paint was flaked and bubbled, floor and ceiling tiles were loose and falling. Also, some snow and standing water were in a building. (See photograph on p. 33.) Vandalism was limited to broken doors and windows, spray painted graffiti, discharged fire extinguishers, and ransacked storage and supply areas.

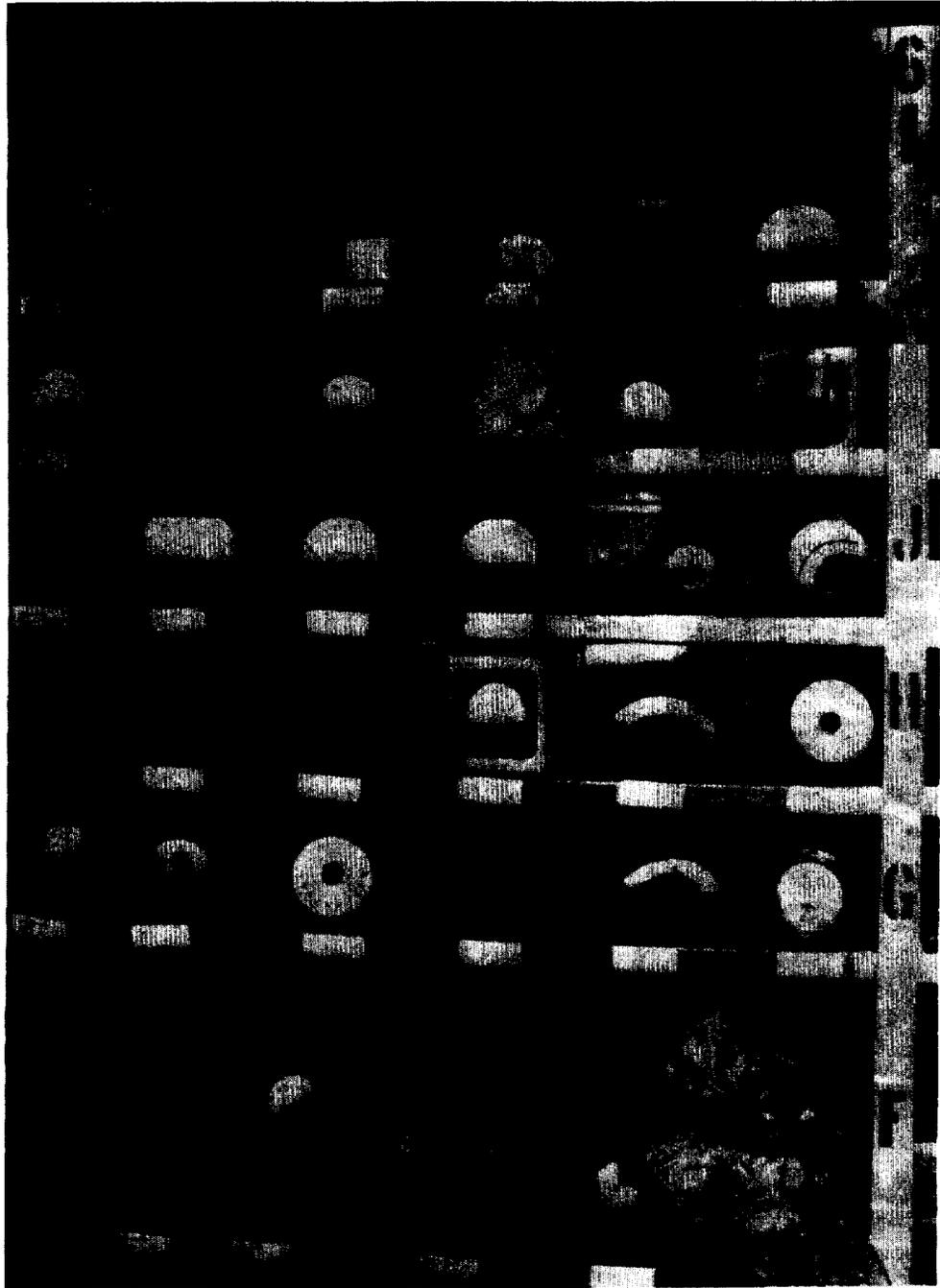
In our opinion, the site is reparable, and items having value should be recovered or sold. For example, there were 12 new Lennox oil-fired, 500,000-Btu heaters that were not needed at the site. A Lennox representative told us that to replace the heaters would cost \$6,000 each. Also at the site were 113 12-volt nickel-cadmium batteries. A man having a wind-generating system near the site said he would buy them



RECREATION AREA AT PORT HEIDEN.



AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIES AT PORT HEIDEN.



INSTRUMENTS AT PORT HEIDEN.



RECREATION ROOM AT NORTH RIVER.

for \$50 each. A roadgrader (see photograph on p. 35) and other vehicles located at the site appeared to be in good or serviceable condition. Many other items at the site could be returned for use or could be sold.

DUNCAN CANAL

The Duncan Canal site was activated in 1961. It is located at the top of a mountain on Kupreanof Island, 5 miles west southwest of Petersburg, Alaska. The site is accessible by water and by a well-maintained gravel road from the beach.

Air Force records showed that the cost of expendable and nonexpendable property at the site was over \$110,000. The telecommunication center, which includes a dormitory, contains 18,634 square feet and cost \$1,659,000.

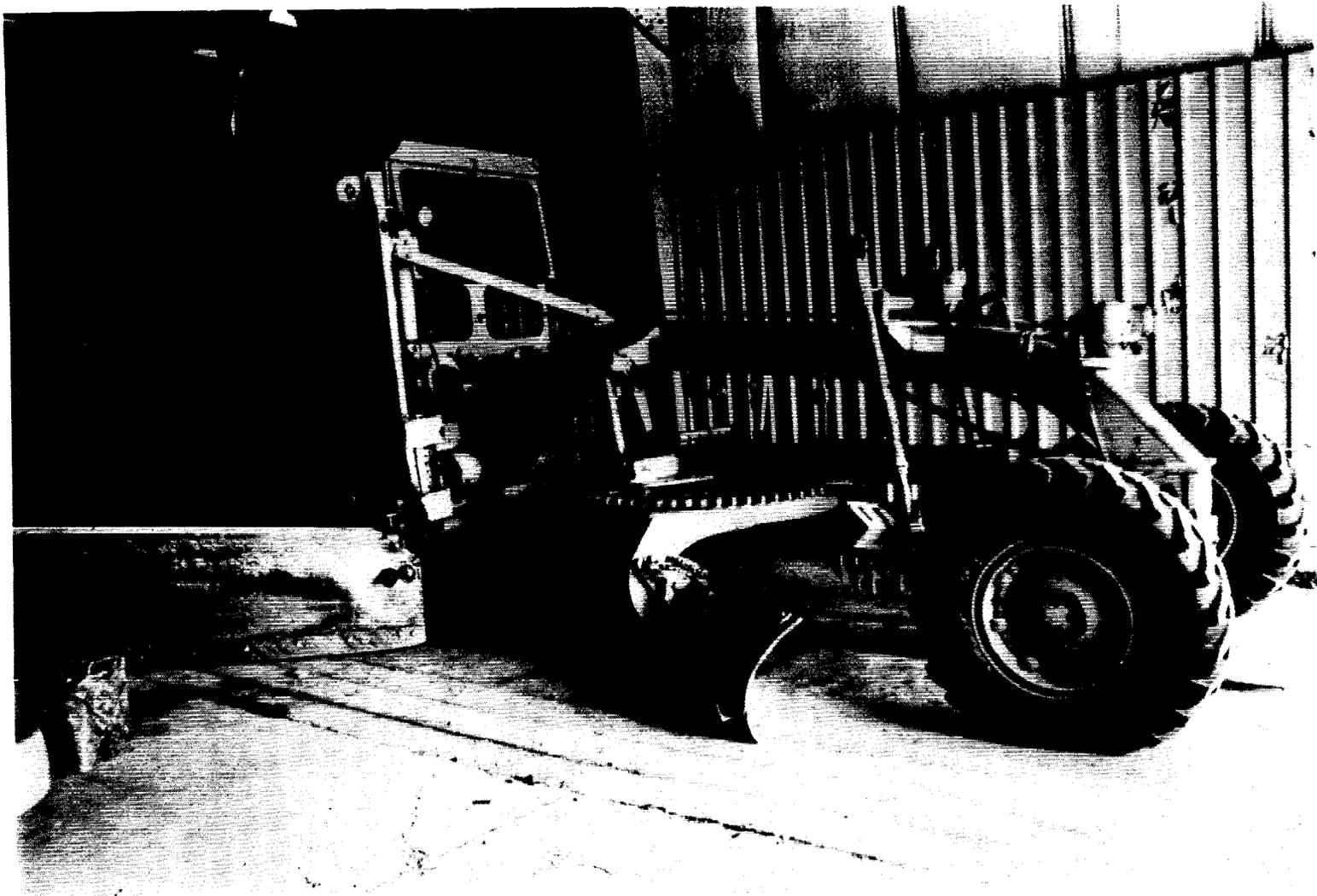
Vandalism (see photograph on p. 36) and unauthorized removal of Government property had occurred at the site. Almost all handtools and some power tools were missing.

The building was damp inside. For example, mildew had formed on the walls (see photograph on p. 37) and almost everything at the site was damp and mildewed. In our opinion, property which had value when the site was abandoned was progressively deteriorating.

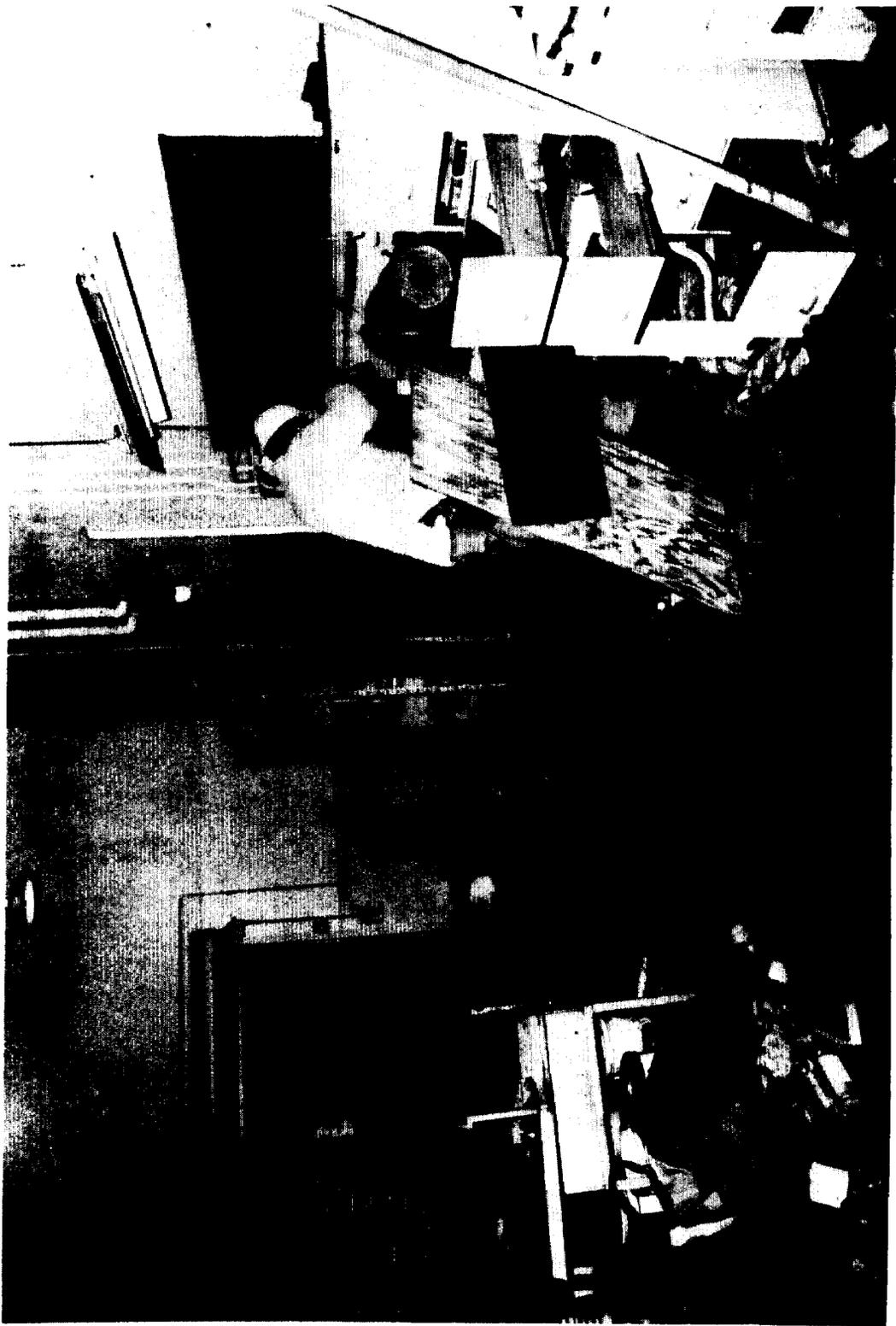
We revisited Duncan Canal on October 6, 1980, about 3 months after our first visit. We found evidence of further deterioration and trespass. If the Air Force does not act promptly, the site and its contents will continue to deteriorate.

The real property at Duncan Canal had deteriorated since our July 9, 1980, visit. Mildew, caused by damp conditions at the site, was more extensive than during our July 1980 visit. (See photograph on p. 38.) In addition, a section of the roof had failed. During the night we were at the site, it was raining and water poured into a dormitory room. The next morning about 2 inches of water stood in the room. The water from this second-story dormitory room was leaking down into the first-story supply room. Since our first visit, the site showed evidence of an unauthorized entry.

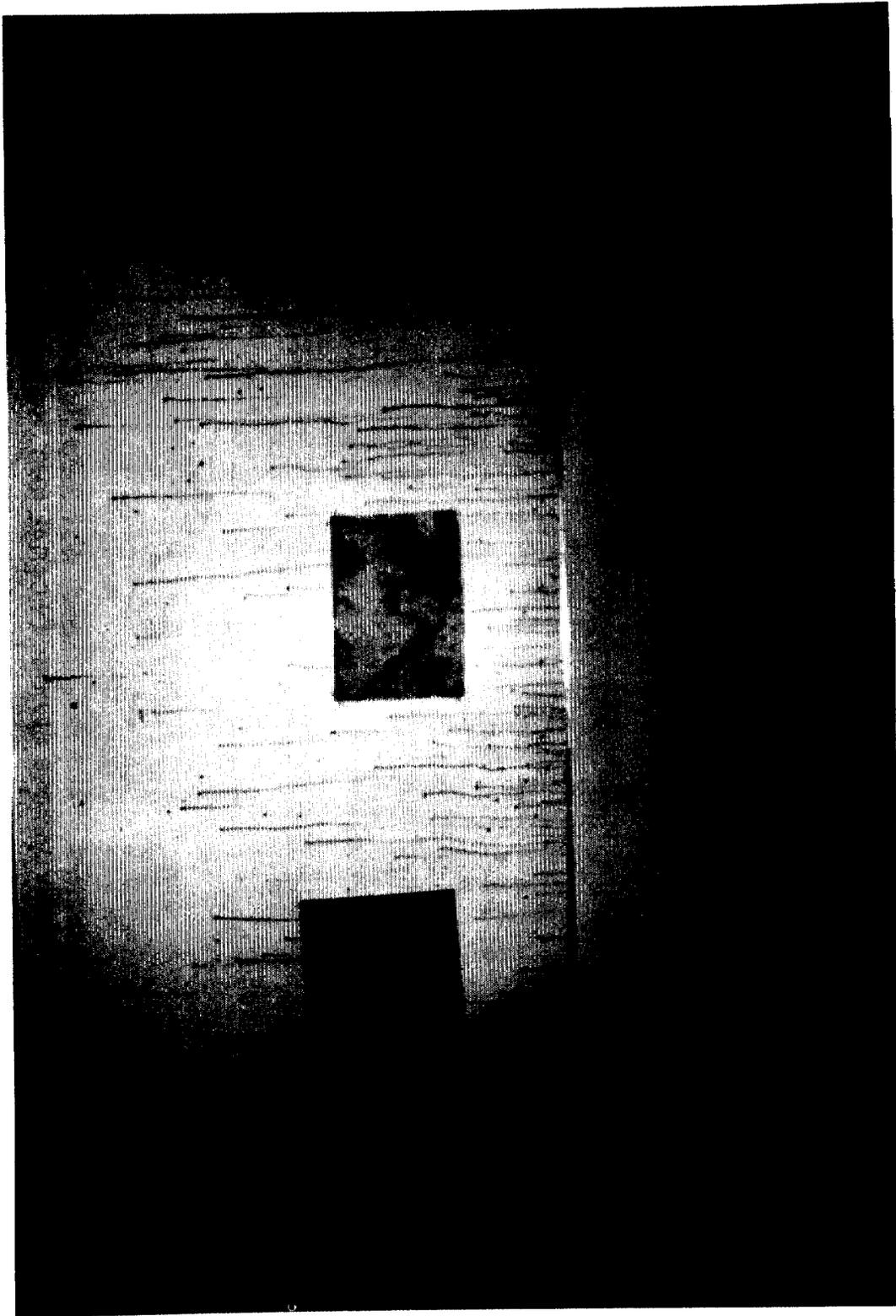
An Air Force contractor had removed junk from a beach at the site and dumped it into the oil containment barrier. (See photograph on p. 39.) This was done after our July 1980 visit, we were told, because the site does not have an approved land fill.



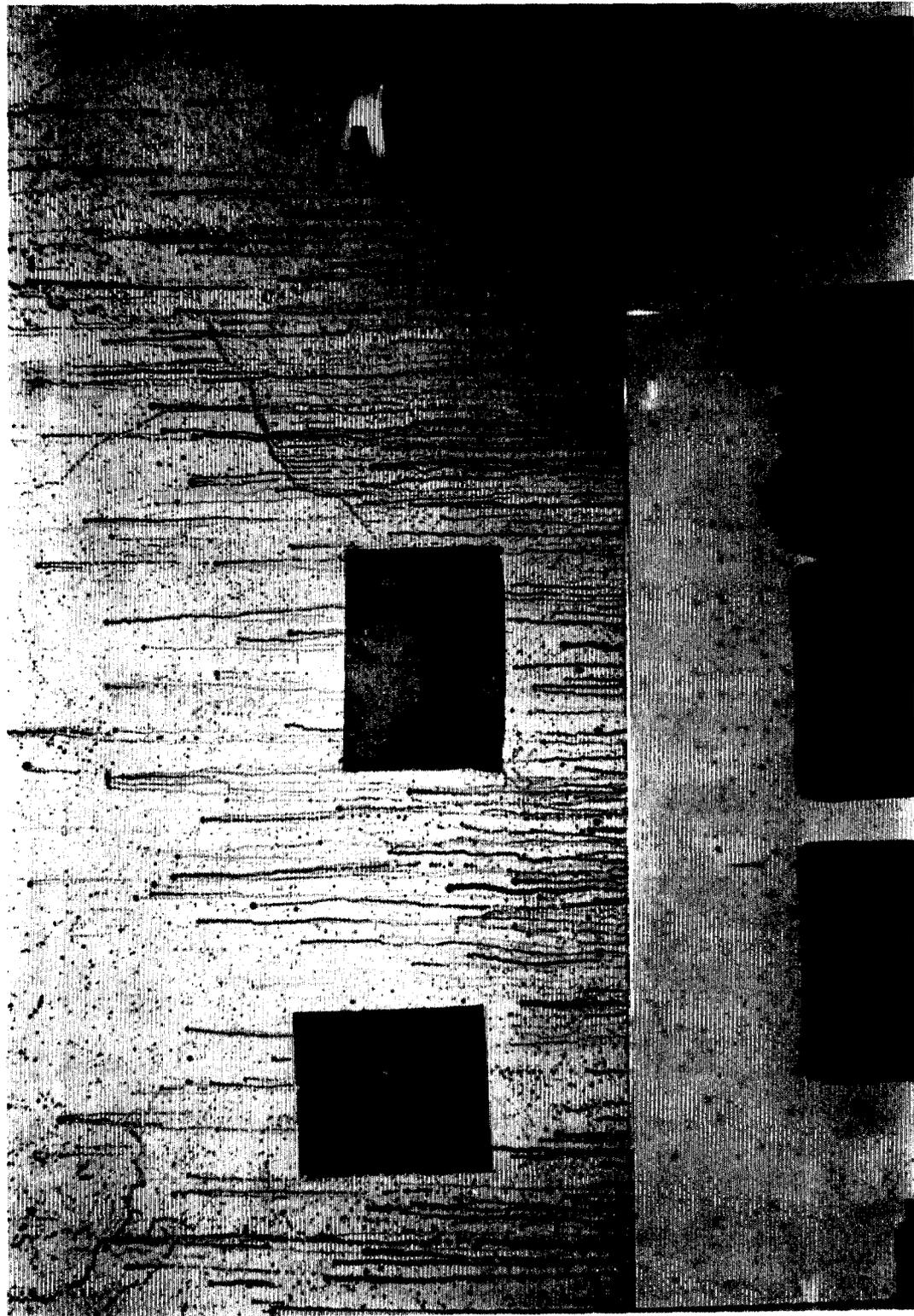
ROADGRADER AT NORTH RIVER.



VANDALISM AT DUNCAN CANAL.



MILDEW DAMAGE AT DUNCAN CANAL (JULY 1980).



MILDEW DAMAGE AT DUNCAN CANAL (OCT. 1980).



JUNK IN OIL CONTAINMENT BARRIER AT DUNCAN CANAL.

BIG MOUNTAIN

The Big Mountain site (see photograph on p. 41) is 225 miles southwest of Anchorage on a mountaintop near Iliamna Lake. The site is accessible by air or water.

Air Force records showed that the site had nonexpendable personal property costing \$228,243 and expendable supplies estimated to cost \$200,000. The telecommunication and dormitory areas contain 13,716 square feet and cost \$1,326,000 in 1957.

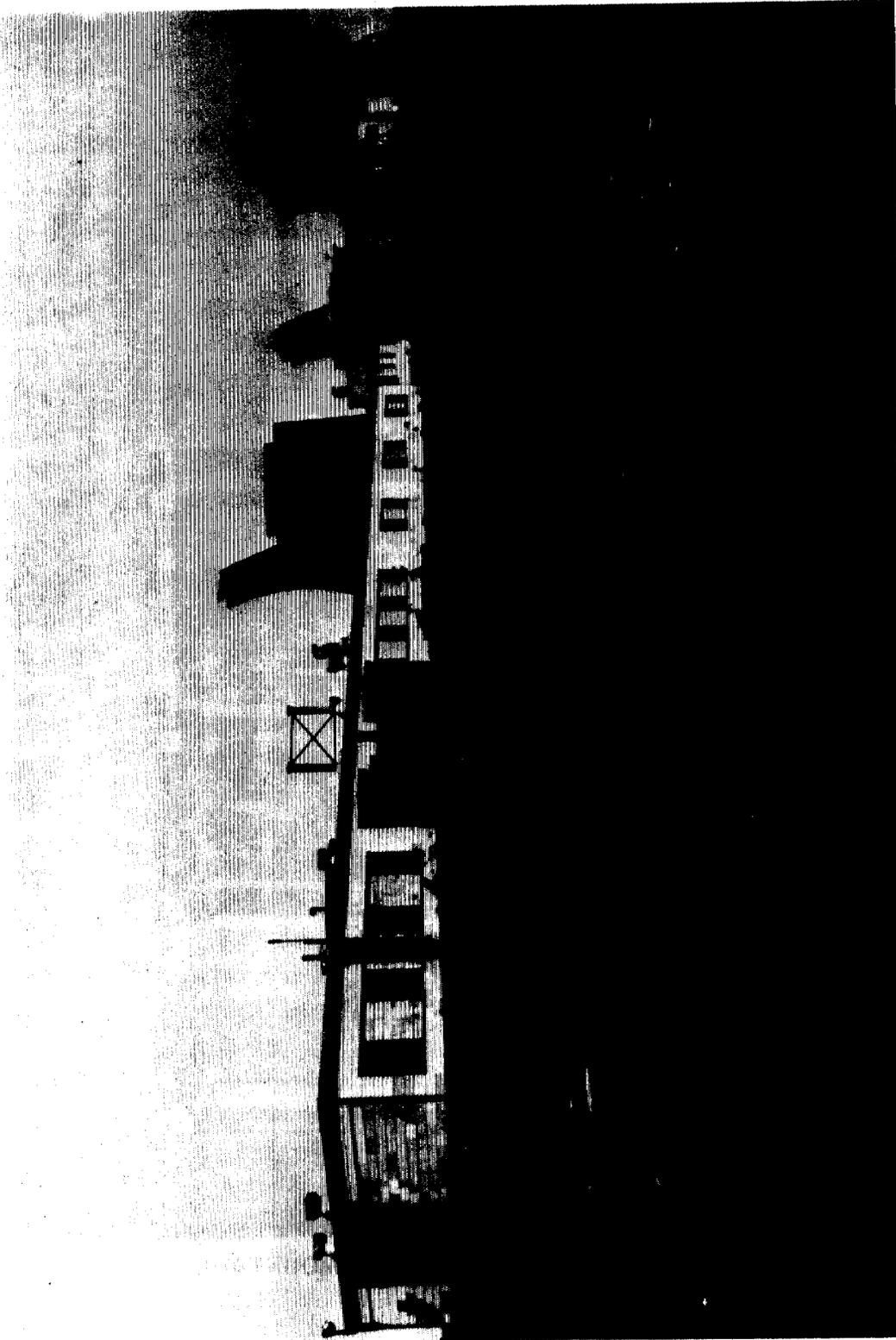
This was the only noncolocated site visited that had not been vandalized; thus, most of the property on the Air Force's list was still at the site. We inventoried all nonexpendable personal property at the site and identified items costing \$261,394, or about 90 percent of the property dollar value shown on Air Force records. On the other hand, many items, such as furniture, a truck, a teletypewriter, electronic test sets, a compressor, portable blowers, a typewriter, and tools were at the site but were not listed on Air Force property records.

The amount of personal property at the site was significant. We saw electronic test equipment, 500,000-Btu space heaters, an oscilloscope camera, emergency oxygen equipment, Scott Air Paks, arc welders, tank trucks, bulldozers, a dump truck, and an end loader. To leave such items to be stolen, vandalized, or to become worthless because of exposure to wet and damp conditions is inexcusable.

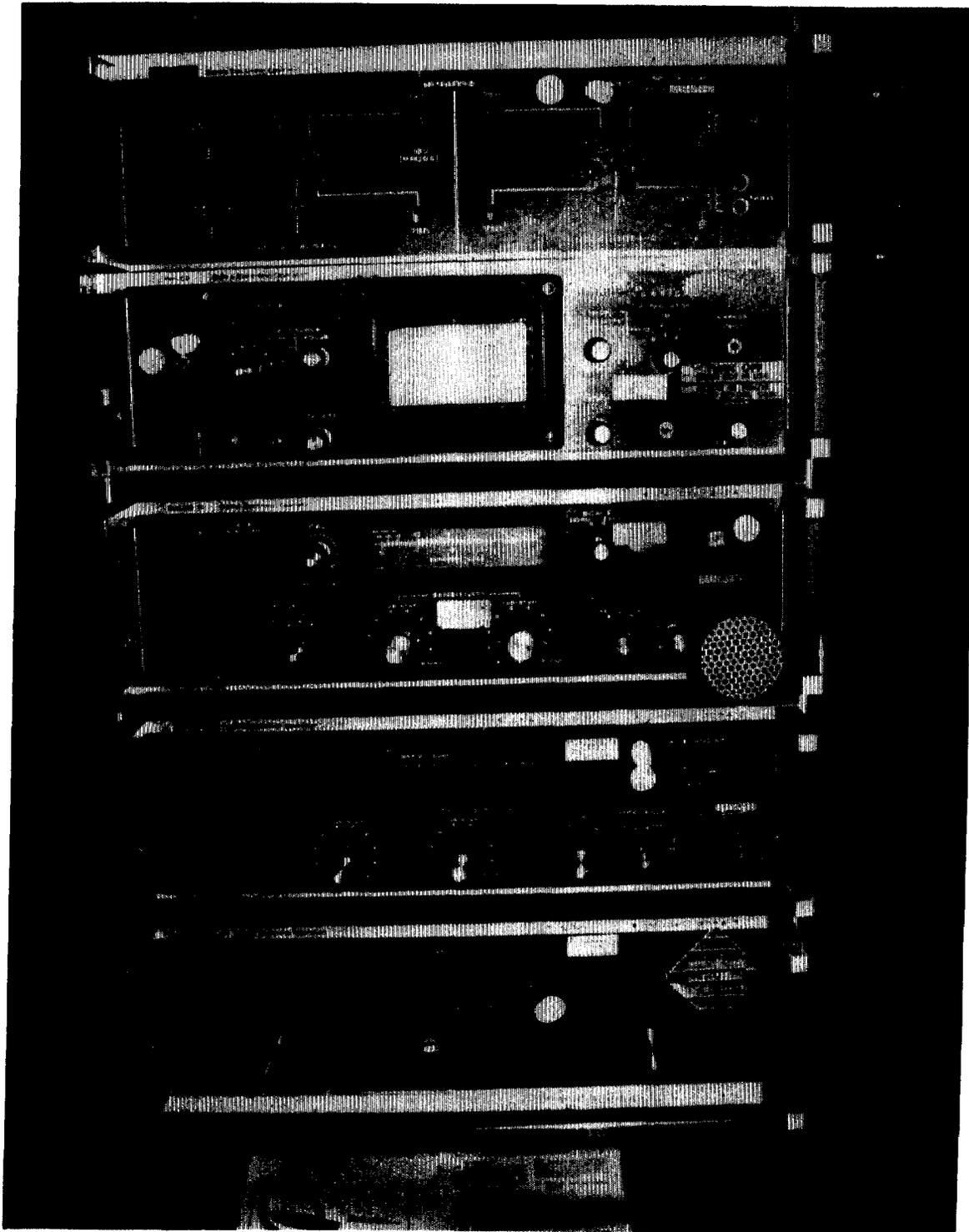
While we were there, a Bureau of Land Management employee visited the site to install some radio equipment and inquired about the availability of a Philco microwave test set at the site (see photograph on p. 42). He said that the Bureau urgently needed such a test set. He added that the test set could be used if removed soon, but would probably be worthless if it sat there another winter. He estimated the set would cost about \$25,000.

The interior of the composite telecommunication and dormitory building was damp. Moreover, because two large doors had been forced open, the generator room was flooded. Wall paint was peeling and mildew was starting to form on the walls and equipment. (See photograph on p. 43.)

Four quonset huts at the site contained expendable supplies. The huts contained tanks of freon, refrigeration coils, brake-shoes, tire chains, tires, residential and vehicle window glass, rolls of copper wire and tubing, lumber, and so on. In addition, a garage had spare heavy equipment and spare automotive parts and supplies. The composite building storage areas were filled with supplies.



RADIO RELAY SITE AT BIG MOUNTAIN.



PHILCO MICROWAVE TEST SET AT BIG MOUNTAIN.



MOISTURE DAMAGE IN HALLWAY AT BIG MOUNTAIN.

In our opinion, the Air Force should make this site secure and should recover, transfer, or sell the personal property as soon as possible.

COLD BAY

The Cold Bay site is about 600 miles southwest of Anchorage on the Alaska Peninsula. Equipment was housed in a room at an active military complex. Access to the complex and room was limited.

Air Force records showed that expendable and nonexpendable property costing over \$218,000 was at the site. Some of the personal property had been crated and shipped to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; the rest was crated and awaiting shipment to Elmendorf. The communications room and terminal equipment were in excellent condition.

CAPE ROMANZOF

The Cape Romanzof site is located on Igiak Bay, about 525 miles west of Anchorage. The site is basically the same as noncolocated sites, except that an active military complex about 3 miles away provides the prime power.

Public access to the site is restricted. Because of its coastal location and 2,600-foot elevation, it is subject to intense Aleutian-Bering sea storms.

Air Force records showed that the site contained expendable and nonexpendable property which cost over \$273,000. The telecommunication center, including the dormitory building, was built in 1957 at a cost of \$2,577,000.

The general condition of the building was poor. We saw snow (see photograph on p. 46), standing water, and fog inside the building. Water was condensing on the ceiling and pipes, which had the effect of rain. Almost everything inside the building was wet, and mildew had formed on the walls and personal property.

We inventoried the nonexpendable property at Cape Romanzof. An Air Force listing showed nonexpendable property costing \$133,364 was at the site. Although we identified items costing \$47,128, we could not locate vehicles that cost \$65,650 and other nonexpendable items that cost \$20,786.

According to an AAC official, AAC had shipped four vehicles costing \$39,871 to the Defense Property Disposal Office at Elmen-dorf. A dump truck costing \$11,100 was at the active military site at Cape Romanzof. Another dump truck, costing \$11,380 had been transferred to an active military site at Cape Newenham. The remaining vehicle was dropped from Air Force equipment records in 1977.

AAC has moved some other nonexpendable items from the site to the active military site at Cape Romanzof; however, the information was not noted on the Air Force's property list. We could not identify some nonexpendable items because they did not bear national stock numbers. According to an AAC official, however, items, such as a pool table, refrigerator, tape recorder, and movie projector, had been removed from the site without authorization or could not be accounted for.

In our opinion, some equipment and supplies are salvageable if the Air Force removes them before the end of next summer. In addition, the Air Force should install portable heaters at the site to reduce the moisture.



SNOW IN BUILDING AT CAPE ROMANZOF.

Property at White Alice Sites

Condition	Port Moller	Port Heiden	North River	Big Mountain	Duncan Canal	Cold Bay	Cape Romanzof
Date returned to Air Force	10-30-78	10-20-78	6-19-78	4-28-79	3-14-78	8-22-78	4-28-79
Cost:							
Real property	\$5,079,000	\$5,079,000	\$5,970,866	\$9,137,000	\$3,215,000	(a)	(a)
Nonexpendable personal property	171,000	153,210	124,338	228,243	74,354	\$118,967	\$133,128
Expendable personal property	b/100,000	b/100,000	b/50,000	b/200,000	b/36,000	b/100,000	b/140,000
Installed communication equipment	b/342,936	365,825	500,000	871,134	b/900,850	b/777,372	742,264
Site accessible by:							
Air	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Water	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Village road	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Colocated	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

a/Colocated sites and real property which will be retained by the Air Force.

b/Air Force estimate.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON 20330



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

May 8, 1981

Mr. Donald J. Horan
Director Procurement
Logistics and Readiness Division
U. S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Horan:

This is in reply to your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding your report dated February 25, 1981, "Air Force Property Disposal Delay Results in Waste and Public Hazards in Alaska," OSD Case #5648 (GAO Code #945438).

The Air Force is responsible for the deactivated White Alice Communications System (WACS) sites in Alaska until final disposal. Although Alaskan Air Command personal property removal and real property maintenance actions have been underway for several years, substantial problems remain, as your report identifies.

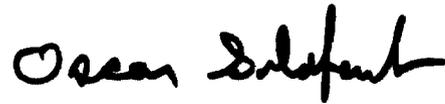
We are developing improvements to the current efforts that will result in a new, comprehensive and effective plan for disposal of the personal and real property at the sites, both those remotely located from active Air Force installations (non-collocated) and those collocated with presently active Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) facilities. Emphasis will continue to be placed on identifying, packaging and removing those personal property materials considered hazardous to the public and on eliminating other public safety or environmental hazards. Alaskan Air Command has allocated over \$400,000 for such actions during the summer of 1981. Further actions will cover inventory and identification of personal property as saleable or scrap and determination of the best means for disposal, either through on-site destruction, on-site sale by the General Services Administration, or retrograde to Elmendorf Air Force Base. Levels of surveillance will be increased. Additional unfunded requirements covering all aspects of required personal property disposal and real property maintenance actions will be reviewed.

Disposal action has been taken or is underway covering the fourteen non-collocated sites referenced on Page 12 of your report. Ten sites were included in Air Force Disposal Report No. 514,

February 27, 1981, heard by the Military Installations and Facilities Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on March 6, 1981. Final disposal directives will be issued upon expiration of the statutory 30-day waiting period for such actions. Directives covering three other non-located sites, due to the nature of their specific underlying land interests, do not require a report to this subcommittee and will be issued within ten days. A final installation, Nikolski Radio Relay Site, is being retained for an alternate mission.

Disposal of real property interests at the collocated WACS sites will be combined with disposals of the AC&W support facilities due for closure upon implementation of a new Minimally-Attended Radar (MAR) network. Funds for construction of a portion of this network and for removal of existing facilities are included in the proposed FY82 and FY83 Military Construction Programs.

Sincerely,



OSCAR A. GOLDFARB
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
(Logistics)



General
Services
Administration Washington, DC 20405

March 26, 1981

Honorable Milton J. Socolar
Acting Comptroller General of
the United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Socolar:

The following is in response to the February 1981 draft report titled "Air Force Property Disposal Delay Results in Waste and Public Hazard in Alaska." We concur with the findings of the audit report and will make every effort to expedite the disposal of these facilities when final reports of excess are received.

The General Services Administration (GSA) has received preliminary reports of excess on 13 of the closed White Alice Communication System sites in Alaska. We have screened these sites with civilian Federal agencies with negative results. No further action by GSA is indicated until we receive a final report of excess. We have identified these sites and detailed the dates of receipt of preliminary excess reports and Federal screening on the sheet attached to this letter. In some instances we screened based on an advance notice of availability and, consequently, the screening date sometimes precedes the date of receipt of the preliminary excess report.

GSA is willing to assist with disposal of the personal property when properly reported. We have consistently advised the Air Force that GSA will dispose of the personal property through utilization or donation when such property is properly reported in accordance with existing regulations. At that time, GSA will make the property available for further Federal and State use. We have not received a report of excess for the personal property. We strongly endorse the GAO recommendation that the property be reported promptly to avoid further waste and loss.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ray Kline". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Ray Kline
Acting Administrator

Enclosure

APPENDIX IV

APPENDIX IV

<u>Property</u>	<u>Date of Preliminary Excess Report</u>	<u>Date Federal Screening Commenced</u>
Aniak	September 17, 1979	March 6, 1980
Bear Creek	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Bethel	September 17, 1979	March 6, 1980
Cape Sarichef	September 17, 1979	March 6, 1980
Driftwood Bay	September 17, 1979	May 23, 1978
Granite Mt.	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Kalakaket Creek	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Nikolski Received notification of withdrawal of preliminary report of excess on June 13, 1980.	September 17, 1979	May 23, 1978
North River	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Port Heiden	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Port Moller	September 17, 1979	April 9, 1979
Big Mountain	February 15, 1980	March 6, 1980
Anvil Mountain	December 29, 1980	not screened yet



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

Mr. Henry Eschwege
Director, Community and Economic
Development Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

MAR 31 1981

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

We have reviewed your report, "Air Force Property Disposal Delay Results in Waste and Public Hazards in Alaska" and feel that the recommendations for curtailing further deterioration and destruction of improvements and personal property at the White Alice Sites and for the elimination of hazards to the public are appropriate.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is not responsible for the maintenance of sites administered by other agencies. However, BLM is involved with processing relinquishments of withdrawals to determine if the lands are suitable for return to the public domain or, if improved, should be reported to the General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal. This entails an on-the-ground field examination and report.

Over the past years, with BLM's priority efforts in Alaska directed toward conveyances under the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), a backlog has developed in processing relinquishments of lands which are excess to Federal agency needs. As a consequence, maintenance by the administering agency in some instances has been required for a number of years before the BLM could process the relinquishment and advise the agency of those improved lands which should be reported to GSA for disposal. As a result of a report by the General Accounting Office in 1980, which addressed this particular problem, the BLM is giving priority to processing relinquishments of withdrawn Federal lands which contain improvements.

A major contributing factor hampering the BLM's expeditious processing of these relinquishments is the problems inherent in the amendment to the ANCSA for Cook Inlet Region, Inc. For example, even if the reports of excess property are promptly processed and determinations of suitability for return to public domain are made during the first field season after the report of excess is made, the lands normally reported to GSA cannot be disposed of immediately. If the State of Alaska does not object to the conveyance of surplus property to Cook Inlet Region, Inc., the property must be appraised, the appraisal accepted by Cook Inlet Region, Inc., and then Cook Inlet Region Inc., has 90 days to select the land. If and when the surplus lands are selected, the conveyance processing begins. This entire procedure may take as long as three years to complete.

We feel it important that you be apprised of these additional constrictions which impose continued maintenance and protection responsibilities on the administering agencies.

In addition, if the Department of the Air Force declares property from the White Alice Communications System to be excess, this Department will review their listings to determine if any of the items can be utilized at the Department of the Interior.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,



Deputy Assistant Secretary - Land and
Water Resources

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